

Ark Volume 13

Act 1: The Whereabouts of the Last Three Marvels

<Episode III: Emergence of a New Continent>

In the high seas between Schudenberg Kingdom and Bristania Kingdom, 'The Lost World=Seutandal' has emerged. There are numerous legends thriving in Seutandal so please enjoy a new adventure.

That was the message every user in New World saw a few days ago. Of course, users responded to this news hotly. New monsters, new hunting grounds and new dungeons! The emergence of Seutandal lit a fire in users who were always thirsty for new things. But it wasn't just users with warrior professions who were stimulate. It was easy to understand when looking at the history of mankind. The appearance of a whole new civilization could possibly upset the normal economy. It was similar to the great navigational era in Europe's history where things like tea, spices and silk came pouring in. The merchants in New World would not miss such an opportunity. All anybody could talk about in the merchant city of Giran was Seutandal.

"Let's go to the land of opportunity, Seutandal!"

"We can't be later than the other guilds, hurry up!"

Thanks to that, the passenger ferries on the East coast of the continent became crowded with users. While many warriors and merchants were flocking to Seutandal, Ark had actually left Seutandal and arrived in Giran.

'Phew, everybody here is distracted.'

Ark dusted himself off and looked around. The NPCs and users in every village he dropped in at would only talk about Seutandal. So many users flocked to Seutandal that the normally busy Giran felt empty. Ark realized how huge it was after arriving on the continent.

'Well, it's not a bad thing if people gather in Seutandal.'

Ark looked warmly at the users heading towards Seutandal. The hunting would decline thanks to the users flocking there. So far Ark had monopolized the dungeons in Seutandal and now he had more competitors.

'But I can't monopolize all the prey in Seutandal by myself. And the situation in Seutandal is now 180 degrees different from the previous month. More people

gathering would naturally make it evolve faster. When that happens, the benefits would outweigh having the dungeons stolen by other users.'

Ark recalled what happened in the last few days in Seutandal.

'Things have worked out better than I thought.'

Although Seutandal rising to middle earth was a big event, it was an even more tremendous event for the Baran clan. The world they knew for hundreds of years was changing. The Baran tribe elders were filled with fear and confusion of the unknown. Their reactions were natural. Although Asia was a new continent for the Europeans in the exploration era, to the natives they were just scary predators. Even though Ark only received 60 points in history class, he knew at least this much. So he quickly gathered the elders when Seutandal finished rising.

"Although Seutandal has finished rising, you can't interact with the continent."

"What kind of place is the continent?"

"It is a huge place many times larger than Seutandal. There is the Bristania, Sinius and Schudenberg kingdoms, with each kingdom having thousands and thousands of soldiers. In addition, the soldiers' equipment is so developed that it can't even be compared to yours."

"T-then what will we do if they invade?"

"We've only just managed to prevent the threat of the Nakujuk....."

The elders murmured with uneasy looks. Ark deliberately put on a serious expression and spoke once again.

"I definitely can't guarantee that there is no risk."

"Then isn't this a serious problem?"

"But the Baran clan aren't weak like before. Didn't you manage to defend against the threat of the Nakujuk? I promise. If everybody unites together then not even the kings of the strong continent would dare invade."

"Umm....."

The elders still looked worried.

"I see what you mean. But we don't know anything about them. We don't know how to communicate and build goodwill with them."

“There’s nothing to worry about. If you don’t understand then you should trust someone who does.”

Ark grinned and replied. In fact, the Three Kingdoms couldn’t afford to invade Seutandal. It was 100% that the ambassadors from the continent would be friendly. But there was a reason for him crating an uneasy atmosphere. It was in order to recommend Isabel who was the head of the Dark Brothers as the representative for Seutandal.

“Oh, that’s right. There is such a way.”

“Yes, we can leave it to the head of the Dark Brothers.”

The elders were so anxious that they all unanimously agreed to have Isabel represent them. Shortly afterwards, Isabel led all of the Dark Brothers and moved them to Seutandal. They settled at Haman Fortress which was renamed ‘Eastern Nation.’ Isabel and the Dark Brothers were finally able to break from their stained past and achieve the new home that they so desired.

‘Then the contract with Isabel has been completed.’

Of course, Ark didn’t do this for Isabel’s good. Isabel promised to give Ark two rewards if everything finished perfectly. He could now receive the rewards since Isabel was appointed the representative of Seutandal. So while Isabel was settled in Haman Fortress, the continent’s delegation arrived in Seutandal. Although he would only briefly describe it, there were two reasons why the delegation came to visit the Baran clan instead of the Nakujuk. The first was that they were a chaotic race and the second reason was that the Nakujuk already tried to invade the continent. They boldly attacked the kingdom of Schudenberg. That’s right. It was the event where Ark sent 50 Nakujuk from the valley village to Selebrid. So the continent judged the Nakujuk as threatening monsters and only sent a delegation towards the Baran clan. Although Isabel was chaotic like the Nakujuk, her beauty made a good impression on the delegates.

“We want to become friendly with all three kingdoms. The Netherworld isn’t an evolved civilization like the continent but it has many resources that can’t be found on the continent. It would be beneficial to everybody if we develop a good relationship. If you want to interact with us then please allow us to send somebody to each kingdom. All future negotiation will go through our ambassador.”

“Yes, of course.....”

So the Eastern Nation was able to establish an official branch in each Kingdom. Isabel also had a condition for the Schudenberg Kingdom.

“I would like you to build the Schudenberg Kingdom branch in Lancel Village.”

The representative from the Schudenberg Kingdom showed reluctance.

“I don’t understand. Lancel is a mountain village that doesn’t have any adjacent villages and isn’t close to the Royal Road. Why would you install a branch in such a complicated place?”

“I understand your point but I’m sorry. But Lancel village has already entered an alliance with Seutandal.”

“Huh? How is that possible?”

“I cannot tell you all the details. Anyway, we have formed a connection with Lancel village which makes our relationship with the Schudenberg Kingdom even deeper. As a sign of friendship, we promise to trade more through Lancel village and give more benefits to the Schudenberg Kingdom than any other kingdom.

“If that’s the case, there is no reason to refuse.....”

The representative didn’t fully understand the situation but accepted her proposal after scratching his head. There was no reason to refuse when they would gain even more benefits.

“Huhuhu, that’s it. That’s it!”

This was one of the rewards Isabel promised Ark. It wasn’t necessary to explain again, but the centre of politics and diplomacy was bound to have commercial development. If Lancel village was designated as the communication place between Schudenberg Kingdom and Seutandal, a number of users of NPCs would rush there. Lancel village was only a mountain village but it would emerge as the new trade centre. Of course, the real estate would boom and Ark’s Comprehensive Store would enjoy more profit.

‘Now the items from Seutandal will be traded exclusively through Ark’s Comprehensive Store to the Schudenberg Kingdom!’

Of course, Seutandal still had a low cultural level so there weren’t that many products to trade. However, the Eastern Nation had already decided its capital city. And Isabel had already used her funds to build a variety of facilities around Haman Fortress. When the construction was completed and Seutandal’s development increased, trading would probably become active. If Ark’s Comprehensive Store monopolized the trade in Schudenberg Kingdom then obviously he would get a large profit.

"This is just the beginning."

Ark opened his contract with Isabel.

<Contractor: Isabel=Ark>

The head of the Dark Brothers, Isabel will negotiate to use Ark's Comprehensive Store in Lancel village as the trading post between Seutandal and the Schudenberg Kingdom. In addition, Ark will also get the rights to establish and operate a trading post in Seutandal.

The right to establish a trading post in the Eastern Nation! This was the second compensation promised by Isabel. Thanks to the trading post in Seutandal, not only could he trade with the Schudenberg Kingdom but Bristania and Sinius as well. Seutandal was still an undeveloped place with few trading posts. If he considered the future, the real estate price would increase tremendously.....

Maybe it would be impossible to maintain a trading post forever. But while he had it, it made the difference between heaven and earth. If he was a normal merchant then it would take a huge amount of time and effort in order to obtain the rights.

"Owning the rights to the trading post is like owning a goose who lays golden eggs. If I regain Silvana later on then I'll also get a share of the Continental Commerce Firm...."

Silvana, Lancel village and Seutandal was like a triangular linked trading connection. Ark's desire to control the markets of Schudenberg and Nagaran wasn't a dream anymore.

'I'm out of range of the Hermes guild while in Seutandal and it's also possible to recapture Silvana.'

When one piece of the puzzle fit then the other pieces would follow. In fact, until recently he had abandoned his plans to recapture Silvana because the Hermes Alliance's forces were more than he expected. But this incident wasn't a small blow to the Hermes guild.

'Sid told me they wasted 3,000 gold hiring mercenaries and now they're almost broke. Huhuhu, that Raiden wasted his money. Moreover, the Baran clan aren't friendly with the Hermes guild so they'll never set foot in Seutandal.'

He assumed that Raiden was hitting the ground and weeping by now. Ark didn't even have to mention all the equipment he took from Jewel's group. Therefore there

was quite bit of discontent among the Hermes Alliance and Sid saw signs of division within the alliance.

‘Well, their strength won’t weaken that much but if there’s internal dissent then I don’t have to worry about them for the moment.’

Anyway, Ark considered all his problems amicably resolved. While everything was being put into order, the people around Ark also became more determined.

“The Nakujuk are still using the valley village as a base to threaten the Baran clan. We’ll stay at Haman Fortress until the Netherworld regains its stability.”

JusticeMan and the rehabilitation members said that they would stay at Haman Fortress.

“We’re going to train the Baran clan and gain some levels as well.”

“What did the Red Man say? I’ll won’t leave him along the next time we meet.”

“Train until we meet him again!”

The rehabilitation members said. Their one-sided fight against the Red Man had a huge impact on them. It was the same for Ark. Thanks to his time in Seutandal, Jewel and Duke weren’t a match for him anymore. Therefore Ark inwardly became cocky. Meeting the Red Man smashed his ego.

‘I still have a long way to go. I don’t know what he’s doing but no doubt I’ll see him again. I have to raise my skills enough to fight him!’

Now Ark’s goal was the Red Man. It was necessary to train even more to exceed his goal. Lariette also decided to stay at Haman Fortress. She was an office worker so playing the game with Ark made her quite tired. Although she regretted it, she couldn’t keep up with Ark’s pace.

‘Well, if I stay with the rehabilitation hyungs then we’ll often be able to meet.’

The one person who hadn’t decided was Buksil. The one who settled his problem was surprisingly Ark. After <The Resurrection of the Netherworld’s World Tree> quest automatically finished, Ark immediately went off to Magaro’s laboratory. With the dimension now stable, the mirage was back to normal.

.....And Ark found a financial windfall.

He finally got his hands on a large amount of potions and scrolls. He found 200 advanced potions and 150 scrolls! Of course, they were items that he could sell in

Ark's Comprehensive Store. But these advanced items had level restrictions. The minimum level was 200. Users around level 100 gathered at Lancel so the scrolls wouldn't sell even at half-price. Therefore Ark left the sales for Buksil at Haman Fortress. A lot of users flocked to Haman Fortress after Seutandal rose. They were mainly high level users. Supplies were needed in order to travel New World. He would be able to get an higher price if he sold the advanced potions to higher levelled players. In the end, Buksil was envious of the items but he became satisfied with selling them. His handling charge for selling Ark's items was 10% of the gross sales! He had difficulty with Buksil in the past but Seutandal wouldn't have risen without the [Banish] scroll. Therefore Ark calculated a large commission. He expected a large income so he could afford to be generous.

'Huhuhu, I'll soon get thousands of gold in my hand when everything is put in order.'

Ark managed to get 900 gold from selling his japtem. There were also the ores he received from supplying weapons to the Baran clan and the 20 items he took from Jewel's group. Now Buksil was selling his potions and scrolls. It was equivalent to 5000~6000 gold. That was equivalent to the amount of money he collected during his first year of playing the game.

'Now all that's left is to sell them. If everything is popular then the remaining lease money won't be a problem!'

Thankfully Ark now felt much lighter.

'As expected, Magaro's quest led to a lot of money!'

He gained thousands of gold from this quest alone. And that wasn't all. He still hadn't received full compensation from the Magic Institute. It was why Ark came to Giran.

"Okay, now shall I officially collect the full compensation for this troublesome quest?"

"Welcome Ark. I've been waiting for you."

Shannen instantly welcomed him when he entered the Magic Institute. Shannen showed Ark into a room and looked at him with anticipation.

"My morning horoscope predicted that the person I was waiting for would come. So I just got a feeling. Yes, I think I'll be happy with your news judging by your bright expression."

"You really are a magician."

Ark smiled and pulled out the books he collected from the laboratory. There were 200 of them. 150 of them were Netherworld related books that Magaro had borrowed from the Magic Institute when he left while the other 50 was his research materials. Ark considered them trash since he couldn't sell it but to Shannen they were treasures.

"Oh, you did it. You really did it!"

As expected, Shannen praised his efforts while drooling over the items.

"Yes, so where did Magaro leave them?"

Ark explained the circumstances towards Shannen when he asked. Shannen sighed after hearing about Magaro's death.

".....That's right, Magaro was remembered for his single mindedness. His tragic end came about from such a personality. Based on his research, he was attempting to raise the Netherworld back to middle earth but his attempts failed and he became like that.

Thank you."

"No, there is no need for thanks."

Shannen waved his hand and spoke.

"The Magic Institute has been stagnant for a long time. But now that the research materials of the Magic Institute's greatest genius has been returned, the Magic Institute might be able to regain its lost glory. I'm thanking you on behalf of the Magic Institute."

The Silver Arrow and Letter Movement that the Magic Institute created were actually based off Magaro's drafts. After the genius disappeared, the technology for the Silver Arrow and Letter Movement was left incomplete and the Magic Institute became stagnant. But now the Magic Institute could use Magaro's research materials. Shannen explained that they could use the research to fill in their incomplete gaps of knowledge in order to create new potions and scrolls. Ark had an ecstatic look as Shannen continued chattering on. The research materials had a larger effect on the Magic Institute than expected so he was expecting a larger reward. Fortunately, Shannen finally stopped the chatter and talked about what he wanted to hear.

“Now, it is time to compensate the benefactor of the Magic Institute. Please receive this.”

Shannen held out a scroll.

“This is.....?”

“It is a qualification to become a member of the Magic Institute filled out by the Grandmaster himself. The Master has already accepted you as a full member of the Magic Institute once the request was completed. I’ll tell you first but you’ll receive very special rights with this.”

Ark received the scroll and the information window appeared.

-You have received the ‘Magic Institute Member’ title from the associated Master.

He has recognized your service to the Magic Institute and granted you membership. The Magic Institute has an impact on the entire continent. Being a full member of this organization is an honour only a handful of people enjoy. This honour allows you to receive a variety of preferential treatment from the Magic Institute.

<When you are a regular member of the Magic Institute, the organization will provide a personal warehouse and laboratory. In addition, goods can be purchased at any branch of the Magic Institute with a 15% discount and you can hire up to 3 NPC magician mercenaries from the Magic Institute. Usually it is a paid service, but it may become free depending on the amount of intimacy>

* As a title bonus all stats will increase by 5.

*Your friendship with the Magic Institute will increase by 200.

*Fame increases by 300.

A private warehouse and laboratory, and discounts on various magic items! It was an amazing reward for a magician. However Ark had no interest in magic. The +5 bonus to all stats was great. The compensation for the title was quite high. But it wasn’t satisfactory compared to all the trouble he went through. Ark wanted a more substantial reward. To be frank, he wanted money.

“This..... Is that everything?”

“Oh, this reward isn’t to your liking?”

“No, it’s not that but.....”

Ark showed some anxious gestures while Shannen laughed and nodded.

“Hahaha, I know. We’ve prepared a present to match the hero of the Magic Institute.”

A young magician instantly approached when Shannen clapped his hands.

“Please guide this friend to the 15th floor.”

The young magician had a shocked expression. Then he stared at Ark before saying in a polite tone.

“.....Come along.”

Ark got up to follow the magician before hesitating and looking back at Shannen.

“Oh, I have one more thing I’ll like to ask.”

“What is it? If it’s you then naturally I’ll help.”

“Can you make two Summoning Ports?”

“Summoning Ports?”

Shannen tilted his head like he had heard the word for the first time.

“It’s among Magaro’s research materials. Was it book 13?”

It was the reason Ark dropped everything and ran to the Magic Institute. It was more important than his ambitions for Hermes and completing the quest..... There was one problem Ark never thought of when Seutandal rose. Ark realized it 24 hours after Seutandal rose and he tried to summon Dedric and Razak who died in the fight against the Red Man.

-The summon command has failed (Area Restriction).

<In the current area summoning/releasing your summons from the Netherworld is restricted. Upon the death of a pet, they will lose 10% of their total stats and it won’t be possible to summon them from middle earth. Instead, your mana will not be consumed while your pets are summoned>

“Eh? What is this?”

A red warning message appeared stating that he wasn’t able to summon his pets. He thought maybe 24 hours hadn’t passed yet but it was the same after a few hours.

“Even though it appeared on middle earth, isn’t it still Seutandal?”

Ark thought this and tried to summon them again on the continent. But the same message still occurred. Now Ark realised that the problem was more serious than he thought.

“W-wait? The reason I was unable to summon them on Seutandal was because we were in the same dimension. But now that Seutandal is a part of middle earth..... Huk!”

In other words, the Seutandal penalty was also applied to middle earth?

“What, what the? So in the future I won’t be able to summon my pets?”

Ark’s eyes darkened as he belatedly realised this fact. Hadn’t he spend 1 year raising his pets? And now they weren’t going to be there in the future.... It was too terrible to even imagine.

“N-no. It can’t be!”

From then on Ark started to wildly look for a solution. And he unexpectedly found a way through Magaro’s diary. Magaro’s diary stated that he applied the Letter Movement technology to a portable object after coming to the Netherworld. The ‘Summoning Port’ was a similar object to the Letter Movement tower where the target was registered to a particular location and could be summoned with no restrictions. It was a by-product of Magaro’s research to raise Seutandal. However, the Summoning Port only worked with contracted summons so he abandoned it.

“Phew, fortunately he is still helping me even after he died.”

He realized once again that it was a game. An unexpected problem would always have a resolution to it.

“Anyway, if I accomplish this then Razak and Dedric can be summoned again?”

But there were still problems remaining. There were no Summoning Ports manufactured in Magaro’s laboratory. He had the plans but rare magic ingredients, advanced magic and advanced alchemy was required to create the Summoning Port. Therefore Ark commissioned the Magic Institute to create it for him.

“Ahh, here it is. Hoo, such a method..... As expected, Magaro really is a genius.”

Shannen made more exclamations as he browsed through the data and materials required for it.

"How long would you take to create it?" "There structure isn't that complicated so it should only take one day. I'll tell the workshop to produce it with top priority. But the necessary ingredients are quite rare so the price will be expensive. Let's see, it's 700 gold for 1 piece."

Ark felt breathless as his jaw dropped.

"C-can't you give me a small discount?"

"I'm sorry but it's difficult. As you can see, this requires a lot of rare ingredients. I've deducted the labour costs and this is just the price for the materials. If I added labour costs then it would be over 800 gold."

Ark knew that as he had also seen the blueprints. 'Eyes of Saraku,' 'Modified Breath,' 'Mana Power' and so on.....all the magic ingredients needed for the Summoning Port were expensive. In addition, if a normal users asked for it then they would've had to pay 1000 gold. He thought he could get a discount since his intimacy was high but Shannen wouldn't budge.

'Dammit, the income needed as a side effect of Magaro's quest seems like it is more than the reward.....'

As expected, living wasn't that easy.

'Two Summoning Ports will cost 1,400 gold. That is probably half of the revenue I've obtained from Magaro's laboratory. His anger felt like exploding when he thought about it but he had no other choice.

His pets were worth 700 gold to Ark. They were an indispensable existence.

'But I'm still lucky. If someone else had raised Seutandal then I would've had to search for a way and then spend 2,000 gold. Fortunately, I got the quest to look for Magaro's laboratory and found the Summoning Ports there. The value of the items in the laboratory will also cover the costs for the Ports.'

.....Thoughts like that were more beneficial to his mental health.

"I understand. I'll calculate it when I come tomorrow."

"Then we'll start working on it straight away."

Shannen smiled and headed towards the workshop.

"Come, follow me."

The young magician sighed as he approached Ark.

‘Yes, I know. This is the Magic Institute’s reward.’

In the past Ark had gone to the 10th floor. There had been items worth hundreds of gold there. But this time it was the 15th floor. What kind of items would there be? Ark imagined the Magic Institute’s rewards and eagerly followed.

“It’s really amazing. This is the first time I’ve seen the 15th floor. Naturally it is also the first time a foreigner has been here. No, I’m sorry. You’re not a foreigner but a regular member of the Institute. Anyway, the 10th floor treasure is amazing so I can’t even fathom how much the treasure on the 15th floor will be worth.”

The magician spoke in a trembling voice as they appeared in front of the doors. He stared at Ark with an impressed and respectful look.

“I’d love to see it too but unfortunately I don’t have permission. I’ll wait here so please enter. As you know, there is only one choice. Once you select it, you won’t get another chance even if you are a member of the Magic Institute.”

“Did you hear that? Don’t eat something selfishly this time.”

Ssak ssak, ssak ssak ssak ssak!

Radun licked his tongue with an apologetic expression. Ark finally entered after giving the firm advice.

“Indeed……..!”

A sound of admiration naturally flowed from Ark’s mouth. The number of items on the 15th floor were much lower than the 10th floor. Each type had only 1 item. But even with a glance, he could tell that the Magic Institute had put a lot of value into these items. As expected, it was like torture picking just one item. However Ark had experienced this situation before. Thanks to that, he had already decided in his heart.

“It must be a sword, a sword!”

It was the most expensive and frequently traded item! Of course, Ark had the very rare Gwisal’s sword. It’s attack power and performance were top of the line! On the other hand, the defense on his armour was quite low compared to his level. But it didn’t matter. If he had to pick among all those items then a good sword would get him more money.

'I have to choose carefully. Of course, the value of most items would likely be similar. That's only when selling to NPCs of course. The price is different when selling to NPCs compared to selling to users.'

In fact, if Ark sold Gwisal's sword to a NPC then he would only receive 600~700 gold. That's because NPCs only think of it as a rare level 180 sword. However it was different on the auction site. Depending on the buyer, he could receive between 1,000 and 1,500 gold for it. On the other hand, rare defense items would only receive a maximum of 1,000 gold. Although they gave a lot of defense, he didn't see the point of picking an item that would sell for 500 gold less.

'There's two swords, a one-handed and two-handed sword.'

This section also caused Ark conflict. It was the 15th floor so it was guaranteed that both swords would be high quality. They both looked wonderful to his eyes. The one-handed sword didn't have any special decorations but seemed to have great damage. Meanwhile, the two-handed sword had a glossy black surface that looked like the scales of a reptile. In general, warriors used shields so they preferred a one-handed sword. Naturally there would be many buyers so the price would increase. However, currently Ark was immersed in the charms of the two-handed sword. Also, his 'Drastic Measures' skill was one that could only be used with a two-handed sword.

'The one-handed sword is good if I only consider selling, but if the two-handed sword is similar to Gwisal's sword then it would be better. I'll be able to use it as much as I want and then sell it. And the rare two-handed sword has a higher chance of learning advanced skills than the one-handed sword.'

In any case, there was guaranteed to be a benefit no matter what he chose.

'Now, money or utilization.....'

He had to make a choice on which would be more beneficial. After worrying for a while, an item he had forgotten about flashed through his head.

'Oh, yes! Perhaps this will be useful.'

Ark took out a small copper coin. It was a 1 copper coin with scratches all over it..... Not long ago, a user visiting Ark's Comprehensive Store didn't have enough money and asked if this could be worth 1 gold. Ark honestly wasn't incline to agree, but it was the early stages so he accepted it to secure the customers. However, it was a very interesting item.

-Lucky Coin (Special)

Sometimes old coins that merchants carry around will become lucky.

With making a difficult decision, there is a 65% probability that this coin will predict a good outcome. But that is all it does. The merchant who blindly believed this coin decided everything using it and became bankrupt.

A 65% probability was quite vague. Although there was a benefit, there was also a 35% chance of receiving damage. However, Ark was guaranteed a benefit no matter what he chose. Then wasn't a 65% chance to get a better result worth it?

"If it's heads then I'll chose the two-handed sword while it's the one-handed sword for tails!"

Ark closed his eyes and threw the coin upwards. Then he caught it with the back of his hand and opened his eyes.

"Tails..... The one-handed sword?"

But Ark quietly frowned. It was a strange thing but the two-handed sword was definitely more tempting. Ark hesitated repeatedly before finally picking the two-handed sword.

"Isn't a coin just a coin? I've never believed in such things!"

The display cases closed with a mechanical sound after he picked his reward. At the same time, the information window about the two-handed sword flashed in front of Ark.

Promised Sword (Rare)

Weapon type: Two-Handed Sword

Attack: 40~50

Durability: 200/200

Weight: 45

User Restriction: Level 250, Advanced Sword Mastery skill

An ancient sword inscribed with complex magic symbols. The symbols engraved on the sword can't be decrypted using the current knowledge. However, the aura it gives off indicates that there is still an undisclosed hidden secret. There is also a

space to fit something between the sword blade and hilt. It seems related to the sword's secret.

<Option: Strength +20, Stamina +10>

<Socket (4)>

"Eh?"

Ark became frustrated at the sight of the information window. Attack was 40~50. It was the same as Gwisal's sword which had a level restriction of 180. In addition, agility and reaction rate in Gwisal's sword was more rare than the common strength and stamina option. And there wasn't even a special option attached to the sword. The only suspicious feature was the four sockets.

"Damn, was the coin's choice correct?"

The value of a sword was its attack power. But to be on the same standard as a level 180 sword? It was a level 250 rare sword but it would be difficult to get a decent price for it. People would pay 2 or 3 times more for a better sword. On the other hand, there would be a lot of curious looks. That's because there have been no socketed weapons seen in New World yet.

'Weren't socketed weapons common in the old online games? Then the performance should be able to be upgraded..... Yes, it is still too early to be disappointed. If you can socket items then the performance will definitely improve. Do you know? Wouldn't it be an awesome item if I filled the sockets?'

"That is your choice?"

"Yes."

When he exited and answered the magician's question, there was a ringing sound and the information window appeared.

<Study the Mirage> quest has been completed.

<All the quests related to the genius alchemist Magaro have been finished>

-Your level has risen.

-Your level has risen.

-Your level has risen.....

He started the quest at level 120 and finally finished it when he was level 300! The amount of experience for all that time invested was enormous. He reached the limit after going up 10 levels. After completing the quest, Ark exited the Magic Institute to look at his warehouse and laboratory.

“Character information window!”

Character Name	Ark	Race	Human
Alignment		Good +450	
Fame	11,425 (+500)	Level	314
Profession		Dark Walker	
Title		Cat Knight, Caretaker of the World Tree, Jackson's Hero, Great Adventurer, Magic Institute Member	
Health	5,005 (+150)	Mana	4,995
Spiritual Power	200	Strength	602 (+28)
Agility	829 (+55)	Stamina	952 (+20)
Wisdom	118 (+10)	Intelligence	971
Luck	112 (+60)	Flexibility	127
Art of Communication	66	Affection	57 (+10)
Resilience	415		
Special stat: Knowledge of Ancient Relics		138	
* Equipment item effects			
Guardian Armour of the Merpeople: Water Attribute Resistance +100%, Penalty based on water is nullified.			
Cat Paws (Gloves): Attack Speed +10%, Agility +15, Critical Hit +10%			
Raccoons Pith (Helmet): Agility + 10, Wisdom + 10			

*<King> Set effect: Strength + 10, Agility + 10, Stamina +10, Defense +20

Warrior's Transcripts (Shoulder Blades): Strength + 3

Wind Spirit's Boots (Shoes): Agility + 30, Movement Speed +30%, Attack Speed +10%, 'Slide' available

Galgashi's Fur (Mantle): Cold resistance +100%, Agility +20, When health is less than 50%, 'Magic Protection' automatically activates.

Adelaine's Necklace (Necklace): Defense + 40, Affection +10, 'Blessing of the Sea' available

Resurrecting Spirit (Ring): Strength + 5, Mana recovery + 5%

Rarukan's Ring (Ring): Agility + 10, Attack Speed +10%, Critical Hit +8%, 'Dark Protection' available

Amulet of Vitality (Bracelet): Health + 50, Health recovers by 5 every 20 seconds

Gladiator's Honour (Bracelet): Strength, Agility, Stamina +10, Fame +500, Sword-based Skill Growth +5%

* All abilities will increase by 40% in the dark

* You have the ability to hide in the darkness (20 minutes duration. Cancelled when you get into combat)

* Resistance to Fear, Darkness, Blind, and Seduction spells is increased by 50%.

* You can bring out the true abilities from all types of tools.

* Shock absorption is increased by 20%.

* Poison resistance has increased by 50%.

* 10% increased attack and defense

* Skill points: 30

After finishing everything, Ark was now level 314. He had finished a few large quests after the battle against the Nakujuk. Now there's only two remaining quests remaining, <Find New Settlers> and the <Home of the Fire Draconian> Well, <Home of the Fire Draconian> would be completed when he went to the Bristania Kingdom

and the <Find New Settlers> quest was only a matter of time. After Seutandal rose, there were some Baran members who returned while others stayed at Lancel village. Thanks to Galen's enthusiastic persuasion, the quest completion was at 95%. The remaining 5% would be filled quickly if Ark actually went out looking for residents.

'Shall I receive the Summoning Ports and then return to Seutandal?'

The problem was that he could only receive the Summoning Ports after paying the required 1,400 gold.

'But that's not all. I have to visit that place that Razak and Dedric had been forcefully recalled to. Hah, it is somewhat pathetic. All the money I'm investing..... Now I have to act like a home room teacher and visit the homes of my pets.'

Ark sighed and walked around. He never thought things would become so difficult after Seutandal rose. But he couldn't move manually across the ocean every time his pets died.

"It can't be helped. I can't just leave them alone. Once I have the Summoning Ports then I can choose a location. Kekeke, eh? What, what the?"

It was at that time. Ark suddenly felt like he was being sucked into a vacuum cleaner. After a few minutes, he appeared in a place with lots of gold coins strewn around. Ark sighed with relief and shook his head. It was none other than Ark's spirit world. If he came here then the culprit was obvious. Yggdrasil and Yuzuria were sitting nearby.

"What's going on all of a sudden? Can you come into someone else's spirit world without permission? I'm surprised!"

-Hehehe, I'm sorry.

Yggdrasil smiled with a spiteful face.

-I called a couple of times but you didn't answer.

"Called?"

-Didn't you feel it?

That reminded him that he felt his bag shake earlier. But he thought it was just his imagination so he ignored it.

But if it was the Sacred Branch then it was similar to a phone being set on vibration mode..... If they wanted to add such functions then they should've made a ringtone mode.

-Yggdrasil, there's no time to talk about such things.

Yuzuria spoke in a curt voice.

Although Yuzuria looked like a young lady, she was actually the same age as Yggdrasil. But wasn't Yggdrasil rejuvenated thanks to the newborn Popo? Yggdrasil nodded before opening his mouth.

-That's right. Ark, I wanted to thank you once again for helping Yuzuria. But I've come to the conclusion that you've been tricked by the Red Man.

"Huh? Tricked?"

Ark's face became tense as the Red Man was brought into the conversation. The Red Man was a powerful enemy who was unable to be traced. In addition, the huge skyray that disappeared after the dimensional storm was over weighed on his mind.

-Actually, it's only after talking to Yuzuria that I know all the circumstances. In the past, the Red Man came down to the Underground World for the cursed dragon. But his purpose wasn't just to release Nídhöggur. His real purpose was to find a Sacred Branch.

"A Sacred Branch?"

-Yes, his purpose was to use it to revive Yuzuria. But at that time I passed all my power to Popo so he couldn't find it.

"Wait a minute. The Red Man's purpose was the resurrection of Yuzuria? Why?"

-That's what I'm going to explain.

Yuzuria raised her body after Ark made a confused expression.

-You've heard the circumstances behind why Seutandal sank to the bottom dimension? It's because I was drained of all my power stopping that horrible magic. But that's not all.

Yuzuria looked like she was going through her past memories.

-It's a stupid thing, but I had forgotten about it until Seutandal rose. The real reason I sealed Seutandal..... It was to seal the Dark Lord's strong aerial fortress, the Rwigenberg. If the Rwigenberg had remained on middle earth then the dark forces on it would have destroyed all

the species in middle earth. The Rwigenberg had enough power to wipe out the torn middle earth.

“The aerial fortress Rwigenberg? Does it look like a giant skyray.....?”

-Yes, that's the body of the Rwigenberg where the Dark Lord's throne was. When the last magic was activated, the Rwigenberg was targeting Seutandal and I managed to seal it up with Seutandal in the dimensional gap. The Red Man's purpose was not to revive me, but to extract the Rwigenberg.

“Rwigenberg? Wait? Then the purpose of the Red Man is?”

-I don't know who he is but his goal must be the resurrection of the Dark Lord, that's the only thing I can think of. And now he will become more active after getting his hands on the Rwigenberg.

Ark's head started thinking wildly after hearing Yuzuria's description.

Now he understood the Red Man. The Red Man made a plan that had two purposes, the conquest of Seutandal by the Nakujuk and the retrieval of Rwigenberg. Thanks to Ark planting Yuzuria at Haman Fortress, he had blocked his plans for conquering Seutandal. But in the end, the Red Man still achieved his true purpose of recapturing Rwigenberg. That was why the Red Man mentioned that it was half a success.

‘That cheeky bastard.....!’

His anger exploded at the idea. On the other hand, he was one step closer towards finding out the Red Man's identity. Even though he wasn't an NPC, Ark still thought the Red Man was a user related to the success or failure of the examination. No, he became even more convinced. He couldn't believe that normal users would have such incredibly high levels and skills and was proceeding with the scenarios in New World by themselves..... So wouldn't he be related to the game publishing company?

‘I don't know but he might be the supervisor of the candidates and is scoring their examinations. I should try not to swear when I meet him again.’

Ark made a promise to himself. Anyway, if he was the supervisor then more information was needed.

“Do you know what he's going to do in the future?”

-I can't tell. And you have more important things than him to think about.

“Huh? What are you talking about?”

-This is the actual reason why we called you.

Yggdrasil spoke in a serious voice.

-Do you remember what I said in the past? That it's not possible to find the last fragment of Hero Maban's three marvels in middle earth.

“Yes, I do. It may be in a different dimension..... Eh? Wait? Different dimension?”

Yggdrasil nodded.

-Yes, it's exactly what you're thinking. I immediately felt the presence of the Three Marvels after Seutandal rose to middle earth.

“W-where is it?”

Ark ran up to Yggdrasil and asked. He hadn't been able to figure other whereabouts of the last Three Marvels. If he found it then he would receive enormous power. After the three fragments were collected then he could receive his 2nd stage profession. Then he might be able to fight against the Red Man. But Yggdrasil wore a slightly ambiguous expression.

-That..... I don't know the exact location. It's exactly 2,600 kilometres from me in Seutandal.

-Heung, are you familiar with Hero Maban? Apart from the raccoons, you're not familiar with any beast clans. Isn't that why you have to grasp the relics left by Hero Maban? It'll be wonderful if you are able to grasp the location without knowing the people who have it.

-Sheesh, don't talk like that.....

Yggdrasil stared at Yuzuria with an unpleasant expression. Ark listened to their conversation before quickly saying.

“Wait a minute. Then wouldn't Yuzuria also know the distance of the Three Marvels?”

-I know that much. It is roughly 700 kilometres from my location.

“That's it!”

Ark's eyes brightened and he nodded.

The world trees probably weren't aware of this concept but he could use triangulation. In other words, 2600 kilometres away from Yggdrasil. And it was 700 kilometres away from Yuzuria. If he drew a straight line from those two places then there were only two possible overlapping places. The place where the two straight lines overlapped was in a triangular shape. In other words, using the map he could roughly guess the location of the Three Marvels. Ark applied this idea to the map and found two locations. However, it was a place that hadn't been displayed on his map (The Big Sea). It was an area on the other side of Seutandal.

-Huh, you..... You're smarter than you look.

What? Smarter than he looked? Wasn't it possible to learn this in primary school? However, there were no primary schools in New World and the world trees wouldn't have been educated.

-Now that it is certain the Red Man is trying to resurrect the Dark Lord, someone needs to stand up to him. There are numerous heroes on the continent, but only you who has inherited Hero Maban's legacy knows enough to thwart the plot.

Every word they spoke pushed him forward down the path. Well, good. It should be to this degree. Ark left the spirit world and returned to Giran.

"Now, his purpose has become clear. Anyway, The Red Man isn't just going to appear obediently when I want him to..... Before that, I have to settle my summoning problem and find the last Three Marvels. Let's go to Seutandal....."

He moved forward at a vigorous pace. Suddenly Ark heard a loud ringing sound in his ears. Why was somebody disturbing him when he had just enthusiastically started moving? Ark was very annoyed and was tempted to ignore it. But it might be a call from the hospital so Ark exited the unit and picked up the phone.

"Hello."

"Ah, is this Ark-nim?"

Hyun-woo frowned after he heard the voice on the phone.

The hospital wouldn't know his game ID.

"So what? Who are you?"

"I'm Ho Myung-hwan and I work in Global Exos Planning Department!"

Act 2: Management's Special Target

What's happening all of a sudden?'

Hyun-woo looked around with nervous eyes. It was 11 a.m. and the cafe was empty because it was before the lunch hour. The reason Hyun-woo was at the cafe at this hour was because of the phone call he received a little while ago. The person who called was Ho Myung-hwan from the Planning Department of Global Exos.

"I can't talk to you over the phone. Let's meet up. Where's a convenient place for you?"

Ho Myung-hwan called him out without any explanations after confirming that his ID was Ark. It had been 1 year since he joined the company's entrance examination and started New World. Global Exos had never contacted him once. In fact, he had been feeling quite restless about that point. After all, they were candidates for the entrance examination. Shouldn't someone from the management level have contacted him at least once? Nevertheless, there had been no contact. If he interpreted it in a good way then it meant there wasn't any problems with him. If it was bad then it meant the company wasn't interested in him. There could also be a happy medium. That was why Hyun-woo was in his present location.

'Suddenly meeting this way.....'

The sudden contact might be a good thing or a bad thing. Was it related to a business matter? At that time, there was an audible jingling sound and someone entered the cafe. It was a young man in his mid-20s with a stocky physique. He looked around restlessly until he saw Hyun-woo sitting near the window and approached.

"Are you Ark-nim?"

Hyun-woo replied with a serious expression.

"Ah yes, I'm Ark."

"Nice to meet you. I'm Ho Myung-hwan who called you."

Ho Myung-hwan handed over a business card like it was a familiar behaviour.

"I'm sorry. I don't have any business cards....."

"It's okay. Ark-nim's telephone number is registered on my computer. Your real name is Kim Hyun-woo right? But I've read your reports so the name Ark is more familiar to me. May I call you Ark-nim?"

"Yes, I'm comfortable with that so it is fine....."

Hyun-woo was now just as comfortable being called Ark as well as his real name. Just like most first meetings, it became awkward after the greetings were over.

"But you look a little different from my imagined image."

"Huh?"

"I've seen Ark participating in New World twice. The first time was in the finals of the Evil Silrion and the second was a video posted on the official site some time ago. Both times you looked like a muscular black wolf. So I involuntary imagined a muscular user."

Although he hadn't gone to the police gym for a while, Hyun-woo had been consistently exercising. However, Hyun-woo learnt taekwondo and hadn't built up his muscles like a bodybuilder. Of course, he had a muscular body from the exercising but it wasn't obvious with his clothes. He also couldn't ignore his lacking diet on the effects of his exercise. But that wasn't why Ho Myung-hwan said it was different from his imagination. The Ark in New World that Buksil captured seemed like a lively and eloquent speaker. Compared to Buksil and Lariette, he was able to make the elders of the Baran clan succumb with a few words. However, he seemed to have an introverted nature after meeting in person.

'Well, it's not uncommon in online games for the personality of the character to be completely different from reality.'

Sometimes a quiet person would completely change when they grabbed the steering wheel. Online games were similar. When a reticent person connected to a game for the first time, they might become completely talkative or specialized in PK.

'There are also people like that. By the way..... Why is he vaguely familiar?'

Ho Myung-hwan tilted his head to one side as he looked at Hyun-woo's face. Obviously this was his first meeting with Hyun-woo. But somehow he was slightly familiar. Was it the overall silhouette or atmosphere? He wasn't able to grasp it so he just asked.

"Have we ever met somewhere before?"

“Huh? Met somewhere?”

“No, you just look somewhat familiar.”

“Well, this is the first time we’ve met. The only other possible time was when I went to the Global Exos interview.”

“No, it wasn’t then..... I’ve seen you somewhere very recently.....”

Yes, Ho Myung-hwan had seen Hyun-woo. Not as Ark who turned himself into Dark Wolf, but the real Hyun-woo. The incident he was trying to remember was when Hyun-woo’s fight scene was captured on a video. Ho Myung-woo thought that he was the same user who defeated Valderas in the Event Quest and made Ho Myung-hwan search for him. However, the phone quality wasn’t that great and the distance too far so Ho Myung-hwan wasn’t able to see Hyun-woo’s face. Thanks to that, Ho Myung-hwan couldn’t recognize Hyun-woo even when they were sitting across from each other. The only clue that connected the two of them was Hyun-woo’s report on the Event Quest and that had already been disposed of. Ho Myung-hwan had looked at that video more than a dozen times. So although he couldn’t see the face, he felt like Hyun-woo was somewhat familiar.

‘Something seems to be stopping me from remembering..... Where did I see him? I think it was important.....’

But Ho Myung-hwan did not pursue it further.

Bururu.

‘Huk, what, what the?’

While Ho Myung-hwan was looking through his memories, he suddenly started shivering and felt cold. He didn’t know why, but he felt like he shouldn’t pursue it further. His animal instincts had sent him a warning. This was dangerous! If he took one more step into the forbidden box then it would be irreversible! He was struck by such a fear. The person who had instilled such fear in Ho Myung-hwan was none other than the captain of the number 1 SWAT team, Lee Myung-ryong.

Ho Myung-hwan had been looking for the main character of the video and received a hot baptism from Lee Myung-ryong who misunderstood the situation. It was a threat to his life that he had received for the first time since he had been born! How many times had he been plagued by nightmares after that day? Thanks to that, everything related to the video was now a trauma for Ho Myung-hwan. Therefore Ho Myung-hwan never imagined that Hyun-woo was the main character of the video. No, he had completely forgotten about the video after that day. Nevertheless,

the sight of Hyun-woo seemed to trigger the trauma so he slammed a brake on those thoughts. The mysteries of the human body were truly amazing. No, the truly amazing thing was the amount of trauma that Lee Myung-ryong implanted..... This was the reason that even violent gangsters would run when they heard the name Lee Myung-ryong. Ho Myung-hwan shook his head quickly and got rid of his anxiety.

"I'm sorry. I guess I made a mistake."

"Are you not feeling well?"

Hyun-woo asked in a concerned voice after seeing Ho Myung-hwan suddenly sweating.

"Let's see? It doesn't seem like a cold..... Hahaha, don't worry about it."

'Why do I have chills all of a sudden? Is my body a little weak these days? Do I have to start taking energy pills?'

But Ho Myung-hwan didn't know the real reason why he was feeling chills. Because the memories of that day and the video had been completely sealed. It was sad but under the threat of predators, herbivores had the ability to forget in order to live. Ho Myung-hwan cleared his throat in order to change the atmosphere.

"Hum hum, now what was I saying?"

"You haven't told me anything yet?"

"Ah, is that so?"

Ho Myung-hwan scratched his head before looking through his bag. Hyun-woo watched him for a while and hesitated before speaking.

"I'm a little curious. Have you contacted any of the other original candidates?"

"Huh? What do you mean?"

"The entrance examination has started over a year ago. In the meantime, I've never received one email from Global Exos. They never said anything even after I've sent in my monthly reports. Did that happen with everyone?"

"T-that is....."

Ho Myung-hwan looked a bit embarrassed at Hyun-woo's question. But after a moment, he grinned politely and nodded.

“Yes, that is the company’s policy. We wanted the candidates to play freely without feeling the burden of being in an exam. I can’t tell you all the details since it is confidential, but solving the challenges set by us is the core of the examination. If we contacted the candidates then they would have no choice but to feel burdened.”

It was a lie. It wasn’t already strange hiring new employees based on the game results. In addition, candidates taking the test were paid 1.5 million won every month. It wasn’t a large amount of for person but there were 2,000 people! The cost for 1 month would come out at approximately 3 billion won. No matter how high their annual sales, even Global Exos couldn’t invest that much money on a simple test. Global Exos initiated such a strange test because their project was more important than hiring new employees. The true purpose of the test was to find what the game developer Park Woo-seong had hidden..... To be more precise, it was to find all the keys to the lock on New World, in other words the master code! For now, no one knew what form it existed in. All they knew was that Park Woo-seong sent Global Exos an email stating it was related to the ‘ultimate goal of the game’ before disappearing.

That was why Global Exos was willing to spend all that money on an examination test. They only chose 2,000 people from all the ones that applied. The screening criteria was not based on their education background or previous history. Global Exos just looked at the candidates ‘online gaming experience.’ Gamers were more likely to find the master code for New World than businessmen. So even if the person only had a middle school education, as long as they were experienced gamers then they were invited to take the test. While Hyun-woo was faking his resume, he half-jokingly wrote down that he had ‘10 years gaming experience’ so he was confident with games. But Global Exos were unable to watch over every step of this project. So from the beginning, the Planning Department had close contact with the candidates classified as the top ranking. On the other hand, they completely ignored Hyun-woo who was classified in the eliminated category. He would probably still be in the same situation if it wasn’t for Buksil’s video. Anyway, Hyun-woo now emerged as a viable candidate thanks to his actions in Seutandal. In such a situation, there was no need to offend him. As a viable candidate, the Planning Department desperately needed Hyun-woo’s friendship and cooperation. Fortunately, Hyun-woo believed him.

“That’s right. Then why have you contacted me today.....?”

“It is thanks to the mid-test check of the examination.”

“Mid-test check?”

"Yes, one year has passed since the examination began like you said. But the period isn't that important. As the director discussed in the first interview, the company is placing a lot of time and funds into this test."

"I'm aware of that."

"One year isn't important, it could be 2 years or 3 years depending on the progress. But a year has passed and management has deemed it necessary for a mid-test check."

"I still don't understand what you are saying."

"I'll explain it simply. We mentioned that acceptance would depend on whether the candidate meets a 'special condition' in the game. So it's not an exaggeration to say that everybody is in the same boat. But certain levels and standards is still required to meet the 'special condition.' It's not like a lottery where the candidate could just meet the special condition."

"Well I guess not."

Hyun-woo nodded. It was natural when considering the format of the examination. Like Ho Myung-hwan said, some people might just coast along in the game in order to receive free money. If the examination assessed the understanding and application in the game, it was natural that a few checkpoints had to be cleared to reach the goal. Of course, Hyun-woo's thinking and Global Exos' was slightly different. Global Exos was just guessing at where Park Woo-seong hid the master code. So their viewpoints were different but they were still trying to achieve a similar goal.

"During this time, the Planning Department has been going over the candidate's reports. Depending on their level, quest advancement or gameplay, 50% of the original group will be eliminated. You can think of it as the first test. All the candidates that have passed the first test will receive increased support."

Ho Myung-hwan smiled and spoke.

"And Ark-nim has passed the first test."

"R-really?"

Hyun-woo raised his head and exclaimed.

"Of course. Ark-nim is the one who raised Seutandal and started episode III. Is that all? The video taken of you by Buksil has received over 300,000 hits. Isn't the video

also being broadcast as a special story on the game exclusive TV spot next week? There is no reason why a candidate who achieved such things would fail the first test. No, it just makes your application look even better.

“Huh? That video will be aired on TV?”

“Of course. The station has already paid for the copyright-related costs.....”

“The broadcast station is even paying money?”

“Yes, that’s what I’ve heard. Didn’t you know?”

“Oh, no, I knew. I’m just surprised to hear it from someone else.”

Hyun-woo said such things but anger welled up in his heart.

‘That Buksil bastard.....!’

He had thought it was strange. Buksil had gone through so much trouble and was still deprived of Magaro’s legacy. Nevertheless, there had been no complaints even before the 10% sales fee and it was because he was receiving money from a back door! It was like he had been slapped in the back of his head out of nowhere. After all, Hyun-woo was entitled to a share. The video was taken using Buksil’s magic projector. It also wasn’t secretly taken but he had filmed with permission. And wasn’t the main character of the movie Ark?

‘What a wily young pig, selling the rights to the video without even telling me.’

He had probably thought Hyun-woo wouldn’t find out about it. Hyun-woo started contemplating how to cook the pig. Then he heard Ho Myung-hwan’s voice again.

“Ark-nim’s gameplay is very interesting when looking through your previous reports. There is a lot of appreciation this time for managing to raise Seutandal. Ark has passed the first test and will receive the full support of the company for the second test.”

Ho Myung-hwan straightened his shoulders and laughed.

‘Isn’t that good? It’s good. Really good, huhu.’

“Well, I was the one who originally recommended Ark-nim.”

“Ho Myung-hwan ssi?”

"Yes, in fact your previous evaluation reports weren't that good. In the past there was talk about eliminating you. But I strongly protested. I saw something different in Ark-nim compared to the other candidates. In many ways your performance was still immature, but I was sure you would pass. So I managed to defer your elimination. I'm just an employee but I have a little bit of power. In the end, it all went according to my words."

Ho Myung-hwan said with a proud look.

"Thank you. Thank you very much. I'll work hard!"

Hyun-woo bowed a few times and thanked him. He was angry at Buksil but now wasn't the time for such thoughts. There were 2,000 candidates so the competitive rate of being selected was 200:1! While some people had just graduated from college, others like Alan were able to splurge a lot of money on the game. On the other hand, having spirit wasn't enough to penetrate the 200:1 competitive rate which was similar to him winning the lottery. If he had to give up halfway.....

Hyun-woo's thoughts were then interrupted.

"After passing the first test, the mode for the candidates has slightly changed. So far we've just checked the reports, but the number of candidates has decreased so we can supervise more closely."

"How?"

"First, please receive this."

Ho Myung-hwan pulled out an equipment the size of a hard drive.

"This is a device that can be attached to the game unit. While the game is loaded after attaching this, all video feeds from the game will be automatically sent to the company's headquarters. We can monitor Ark-nim's gameplay without the need for reports. The video will be used for evaluation and publicity material."

"Wait a minute. All of my gameplay will be saved?"

"Yes, is there a problem?"

"A problem....."

There was one. It was a big problem. There were many parts of Hyun-woo's gameplay that couldn't be shown. If they saved all his gameplay then wouldn't they see his lousy actions such as threatening the Three Pig Brothers and Sid, as well as

cheating the NPCs? Of course, Hyun-woo's conscience wasn't affected by his actions but he couldn't tell what other people would think. In addition, it might even cause problems for Hyun-woo's businesses. His method of setting up a trading post in Lancel village, Seutandal and even Silvana was close to fraud. Of course, it was rare for the game developers to interfere directly with the game but there was Alan's example in the past. Alan aimed for the loophole in the system and managed to avoid the challenge of other guilds. As soon as they were informed, the system was update and that method blocked off. Hyun-woo didn't want changes in the rules to affect his businesses. No, Hyun-woo might get punished even more as a candidate compared to normal users.

'It can't happen. All of my struggles.....'

How much trouble had he gone through to set up trading posts in Lancel, Seutandal and Silvana? In addition, how much money had he invested into it? Even now he was still pouring a huge amount of money and time into it, but it was a long term plan that would give him the goose that laid golden eggs. Hyun-woo would cry if there were any problems with any of his businesses. Of course, in the viewpoint of a candidate there were no big problems. But what would happen if he joined Global Exos? Cash transactions for game items were legally allowed but it was different if he was an employee of the company. That's why Hyun-woo hadn't mentioned his various projects and items sold on his reports.

'While the annual salary of a Global Exos employee can reach 100 million, the first few years it would only be around 5,000~6000. With an income of 5~6 million won per month, it's not enough for my living costs and the hospital bills.'

Of course, if Hyun-woo passed then he could make money separately in the game. But if all his gameplay was viewed by the company then it would be an issue.

'Joining Global Exos or the online game. Needless to say, both are important.'

At first, he thought he would do anything as long as he joined Global Exos. But his thinking had changed a little while in New World. If Hyun-woo summarized his assets from his bank balance, the lease contract and the amount invested in Lancel village, he had approximately 90 million won. There was also the 5 million won he earned approximately every month for a year. It was hard to believe, but in one year he had managed to earn 150 million won from New World. Of course, the support salary from Global Exos was included but it was still more than the salary of an average Global Exos employee. If Ark completed his trade routes and planned then his income would jump even more. Still, the reason Hyun-woo wanted to join the company was because he never imagined it thanks to his educational background. In

addition, the game was a game. He could receive that kind of income in New World now but he never knew when that would change.

'Mother also asked Gwon Hwa-rang ajusshi how I was making all that money. She never expressed it but she wants me to get a decent job and have a stable life. If I get a job at Global Exos then the monthly salary will steadily rise and might become more than the income I get from the game.'

Hyun-woo had to pass the company examination somehow for his mother. He had finally passed the first test. 50% of the candidates had been dropped so the competitive rate was now 10:1. Was it possible to give up his current income when he didn't know if he would pass the test or not? The other problem was that he wouldn't be able to afford the costs of living and hospital bills if he gave up his current income.

"What's wrong?"

"No..... Are you sure I have to wear the equipment?"

"That's the company's policy."

"But didn't you just say that the company's policy was to allow the candidates to play freely without any pressure? If you're monitoring all my gameplay then of course it would be a burden."

"Ugh, t-that is....."

Ho Myung-hwan looked embarrassed as he was unable to refute Hyun-woo's logic.

"I'm just telling you what my superiors have directed me to."

Ho Myung-hwan panicked at Hyun-woo's counterattack and was only able to say that he received instructions from his superiors. Hyun-woo thought for a moment before sighing and shaking his head.

"Then I'll have to give up the entrance examination."

"Huh? What do you mean? Give up on the test?"

"It's just like I said. I don't want videos to be taken of my gameplay. Thanks to Global Exos' policy, I've been playing the game freely. It was because I played freely that I was able to pass the first test."

"I understand what you're saying. But we have no intention of interfering while monitoring you. It is literally just monitoring. All we will do is watch."

"But I have a timid personality so if Global Exos is watching then I won't be able to play like I do now. Eventually I'll just fail the test. So it is better for me to give up early and play the game more comfortably."

The choice Hyun-woo selected was inevitable. Playing the game with the device attached wasn't a problem. However, if they saw Hyun-woo's wicked actions then it would be impossible for him to receive a good evaluation. It was highly unlikely that he would make it pass the second test and would end up failing. And they might apply sanctions or severe consequences to the projects that Hyun-woo currently had in progress. If so, it would be better to just give up and focus on his businesses.

'Unfortunately it can't be helped. I absolutely can't give up the businesses.'

Of course, giving up the test also wasn't a simple matter. If he gave up the exam then he had to return the game unit. Although putting everything in order with the lease business, he would have no money to afford a game unit.

'For the moment, I'll just have to use the game room while until I save enough money.....'

Hyun-woo sighed at the idea. But Ho Myung-hwan was even more frustrated than Hyun-woo. After an awkward silence, Ho Myung-hwan got up from his seat.

"Please wait a minute. I need to call someone."

Ho Myung-hwan hurriedly exited the cafe, crouched on the stairs and took out his phone. After a few beeps, the voice of the Chief of the Planning Department Ha Myung-woo was heard.

"Is everything resolved?"

"Ah, no. That's why I'm calling."

"Why? What's the matter?"

"That..... Ark wants to give up on the test."

"What, what the? What are you saying? How the hell did he come to that conclusion?"

"He didn't like the fact that we will monitor all of his gameplay."

"Why is that a problem? Did you explain it properly? We're just going to monitor and not interfere. Did you say something to offend him?"

"No, I explained it properly."

Ho Myung-hwan replied while sweating. While Ho Myung-hwan made it sound like they were doing him a favour, monitoring Hyun-woo's game was incredibly important to the Planning Department. After the Planning Department watched the video and discussed it, they thought that Hyun-woo was actually the closest to their goal. Thanks to that, it was necessary to recruit Hyun-woo through any means possible. And the Planning Department was indeed finding prominent users and monitoring them while giving support money. All this painful effort was to find the master code. Thus Ha Myung-woo was willing to commit a significant amount of money to attract Hyun-woo. However, his attitude changed in regards to Hyun-woo.

"You don't have to bother giving him a lot of money. Just use any excuse to get permission to monitor his game."

Thus Ho Myung-hwan called Hyun-woo to meet.

".....Perhaps he has already been contacted by another company?"

Ha Myung-woo asked in an uncomfortable voice after thinking for a moment. The online gaming market had a tremendous capital beyond the public's imagination. And the most important thing in the gaming market was information. Thus various game companies were engaged in a fierce behind the scenes battle in order to obtain these information from the users. Global Exos was a corporate giant that controlled 30% of the online gaming industry. Therefore they were the target of many game companies. And recently Global Exos had no ability to control the main system of New World.....

So other competitors employed professional gamers to sneak into New World in order to obtain information. The so-called spy. Thus the Planning Department of Global Exos couldn't afford to relax. They couldn't imagine what would happen if the master code for New World landed in the hands of their competitors. In order to prevent that worst case situation, they needed to have access to the user most likely to find the master code. It would be a serious problem if Hyun-woo was in contact with their competitors.

"No, there are no signs of that"

"Then it makes no sense. If no one else is meddling then why would he give up?"

"Well, let's see. He simply wants to play the game without others watching....."

"Damn, it can't be helped. Let's offer to increase the funding. Offer 1 million won more! That is how much we use when recruiting users that aren't a candidate."

"If it's that much then there is no reason to quit."

Ho Myung-hwan entered the cafe again with a confident expression.

"I just talked with my team chief right now. But we still need to monitor....."

"Didn't I say I was giving up the test?"

"That would be a problem. How about this instead? We'll increase your current support funding of 1.5 million won to 2.5 million won. This is a privilege that other candidates don't have."

"But....."

Hyun-woo struggled for a while before shaking his head. 2.5 million won a week was equivalent to his old monthly salary at the convenience store. However, it wasn't possible to exchange it for his ability to make money freely in the game. No, the main problem wouldn't be solved with an increase in the money.

"I'm sorry. I'm a free spirit....."

Ho Myung-hwan's confident face darkened at Hyun-woo's answer and he excused himself again. Ho Myung-hwan crouched on the stairs and once again heard Ha Myung-woo's voice on the phone.

"What the? He still wants to give up?"

"Yes, that's..... He is a free spirit....."

"Is this a joke?"

"No, that's what Ark-nim said."

"Dammit! That bastard, is he crazy? Are we handcuffing him? We're just monitoring so what's with this stupid free spirit stuff?"

"What do I do? Will we have to give up at this rate?"

"Don't be stupid. You were confident about persuading him thanks to reading his reports. There must be another reason for him so stubbornly refusing."

"What else would it be?"

"He is as cunning as a raccoon. He might've already been in contact with the competitors. The other side has probably presented their own terms. He is clearly weighing the conditions. And he became filled with confidence after you appeared."

"Then.....?"

"Yes, he doesn't know about the master code but it is clear that our competitors want 'something'. Even if he's not in contact with our competitors, it might be a problem if he gives up the test and then finds the master code."

He heard the sound of Ha Myung-woo grinding his teeth through the phone.

"Okay, it can't be helped if he is weighting the offers. The competitors don't know that we are looking for the master code. They're probably just going around stabbing blindly. In such a situation, they wouldn't offer more than 3 million won. So we will raise the funding by one more million. And 300 points will be added to his test score. If 300 points are added then he'll be the top candidate."

"The test scores are posted separately?"

"Are you stupid? Just say it. Threaten to collect the support money provided so far if he still refuses!"

"But there is a clause in the contract....."

"Shut up, just use any method possible! Make him accept!"

"Yes, I understand."

Ho Myung-hwan wiped at his sweat and entered the cafe.

If Hyun-woo didn't give permission then his neck would be on the line.

'Why is this happening?'

Hyun-woo was also puzzled by Ho Myung-hwan's attitude. He seemed to have met some type of condition after the events in Seutandal. But was it just that? It didn't exactly demonstrate any practical skills. So he couldn't understand why they were clinging to him.

'I don't know why but 3.5 million won every month and points added to my score.....'

It wasn't something Hyun-woo could easily refuse. However, he still thought maintaining his businesses in New World was better than the support money.

‘Will they offer more money if I hold out?’

Hyun-woo’s thoughts were then interrupted. Ho Myung-hwan added in a begging voice.

“This is the maximum amount we can offer.”

‘Looking at that expression, it seems they will not offer any more money.’

So he had no choice but to decline. Hyun-woo shook his head with a sigh and Ho Myung-hwan made a desperate expression.

“It’s a request. You’ve already allowed one video.”

“But having all of my gameplay watched..... It would be different if I could take the videos and upload it.....”

“Huh?”

Ho Myung-hwan’s eyes widened.

“Who said you couldn’t do that?”

“I can?”

“We just want to gather information about how a candidate triggers a scenario. Do you think we would watch videos of 1,000 candidates for 24 hours every day? We just want information about the candidate’s quests and how it affects the quest system. We can’t see all the details with the reports which is why a video is required. There is no need for anything except the main situation.”

Hyun-woo and Ho Myung-hwan looked at each other with stupid expressions. They didn’t know how but wasn’t the situation somehow resolved?

‘What the? There wouldn’t have been any problems if you just said so in the first place.’

Hyun-woo thought to himself. But he managed to get an extra 2 million won and 300 points from the misunderstanding. Hyun-woo felt like flying but he didn’t show it. If he hadn’t misunderstood and refused then he didn’t know what conditions would’ve been offered.

“Phew, it can’t be helped. There’s no longer any reason to refuse. I’ll accept as long as I get paid and am allowed to take and send in the videos.”

"Really?" Thank you. Thank you!"

Ho Myung-hwan got up and shook Hyun-woo's hand. The role of the candidate and supervisor seemed to have changed. Now that things had been cleared up, Ho Myung-hwan wrote up a simple contract.

"There are a few conditions instead of the 24 hour monitoring. It isn't required when taking a break in town or meeting other players, but you must shoot the scenes of your quests. And once the video has been filmed, it shouldn't be edited."

That wasn't a problem. Apart from the information related to Seutandal and Silvana's trading post, Hyun-woo saw no need to hide anything else. On the other hand, Global Exos believed that the master code was associated with a quest. Therefore there was a need to grasp all the candidate's quests. In addition, the condition of no editing was in case Hyun-woo obtained information related to the master code and tried to hide it. So there were no problems because the part that Hyun-woo wanted to hide was different from what Global Exos wanted to see. Hyun-woo suddenly asked as the agreement was being drawn up.

"You said the videos sent could be used as promotional materials?"

"Yes, sometimes the materials is requested by the TV broadcasters or it is used in advertisements. Oh, if that happens then you'll be contacted and a separate performance fee will be paid. In this age, the game character could also be used as publicity."

"It nothing to do with that..... If possible, I don't want my real name of game ID disclosed. I hope for my face to be unknown."

"Do you have some problems?" Ho Myung-hwan asked with a doubtful expression.

"Like I said, I'd like to play the game freely. If other users know too much then I won't be able to concentrate on the game."

"You don't have to worry about that. Such provisions are actually common in promotional materials. I'll contact you in advance if there is ever such a situation."

Ho Myung-hwan was once again very cooperative with Hyun-woo. Then Hyun-woo asked Ho Myung-hwan in a coy voice.

"By the way..... Is the Red Man a character associated with the test?"

He had thought about giving up the test just then but now the situation had changed. Now he had a chance of passing the entrance examination and still getting

his golden goose. It was difficult to question the company's staff so he wanted to get as much information as possible.

"Huh? Red Man?"

Ho Myung-hwan repeated in a strange voice. Hyun-woo had met the Red Man twice on Seutandal. However he had been too far away in the Abyss of Despair to see his face clearly, and when the Red Man attacked Haman Fortress it had been so dusty that Buksil wasn't able to film. Thanks to that, the important Red Man didn't appear in Buksil's video. But Ark obviously thought that Ho Myung-hwan would know who he was talking about.

"There have been several hints. If he wasn't related to the test then it would be impossible to arrange the schemes in the Underground World or on Seutandal."

"Why don't you tell me more?"

Ho Myung-hwan listened closely to Hyun-woo's words. Hyun-woo explained his reasons for thinking that the Red Man was associated with the test. He mentioned his incredible skills and the plot to revive the Dark Lord.....

"Are my thoughts correct about it being one of the test challenges?"

"That..... I cannot tell you yet."

'Indeed! My guess is correct.'

Hyun-woo became even more convinced after Ho Myung-hwan's words. Why would he act like that if the Red Man wasn't a part of the test? But that was Ark's mistake. In fact, even Global Exos wasn't sure what they were looking for. Thanks to Hyun-woo mentioning the Red Man, they might finally have a clue.

'Although it wasn't clearly told, the Red Man clearly is associated with the test. That guy is sweating so much after I mentioned it. If we stay in touch then I might be able to figure out more about the Red Man.'

That was Hyun-woo's thoughts.

'Such a character is really running around New World. Maybe Ark-nim really will find what we are looking for. This is important information! If we use Ark-nim then we might be able to find out more.'

That was Ho Myung-hwan's thoughts.

“Ark-nim is now one of management’s special targets so we’ll be contacting you more often. I told you that I like the way Ark-nim plays. If you have any concerns then please get in touch with me.”

Continue tracking the Red Man. That was the company’s main concern now. Hyun-woo accepted Ho Myung hwan’s number.

“You never know, we might end up working in the same company.”

Hyun-woo and Ho Myung-hwan shook hands firmly before leaving. An incredulous laugh escaped from Hyun-woo’s mouth on his way home.

‘Huhuhu, what is with this incredible windfall? 3.5 million won in support money and an opportunity to get information from the employees of the company..... Not passing the entrance examination is not just a dream.’

He didn’t feel tired anymore. Hyun-woo entered the unit as soon as he arrived home. Everything Hyun-woo wanted to achieve was in there.

Act 3: Isyuram’s Incident Records

“Huhuhu, we’ve finally arrived!”

An excited voice was heard in the darkness. The person laughing was a huge warrior wearing leather armour and holding a bayonet could be seen.

“Why are you giggling to yourself? Didn’t I tell you? Don’t relax just yet. If you made even one mistake then all our efforts will be in vain.”

“Sheesh, you don’t have to explain it again.”

The warrior scowled at the woman standing to the side. It was a woman wearing white chain mail and holding a long spear. They were users called Bread and Redian.

“But aren’t you excited? It’s already been 10 days since we came to this dungeon.”

“It’s been so long since we’ve seen sunlight. My skin has become even paler.....”

Redian murmured as she looked at the white skin between her collar. Then Bread glanced at her and smirked.

“Huhuhu, isn’t it a good thing? You look somewhat sexier.”

“Do you want to die?”

“What’s wrong with it? It’s a good thing.”

“Do you want to fight?”

Redian raised her spear, causing Bread to quiver and retreat.

“Stop it, I hate that spear.”

“Then why do you exist on provoking me every time? Don’t you have a brain? Haven’t you learnt your lesson yet?”

“It’s because of the piled up stress. This dungeon is so uninteresting. There isn’t even a common ogre in this thing. The Drakens are so boring. There was only a few of them. It’s so boring I’m about to doze off.”

“You’re just a barbarian..... You’re the only one who would think a few Drakens is uninteresting.”

“A boring thing is boring. Ah, why aren’t there any strong guys?”

“Stop whining and just look for the inscription. There’s not much time left. Fortunately we’ve seemed to have reached the last checkpoint.....”

“Okay. I understand.”

Bread grunted and started searching the nearby statues. The place where Bread and Redian was searching was an underground stone room in a complicated maze. The two people had entered the dungeon 10 days ago and it had taken them a lot of time and backtracking to find this place. Their long journey had begun two months ago when a document dropped from a high level boss called Kalropsu. A quest had been triggered when the document was picked up.

-Asyubell’s Notes

The travel diary of the legendary adventurer Asyubell. Everything is in code so ‘advanced text deciphering’ is required.

<Difficulty: C>

“Oh, Asyubell’s Notes?”

Bread was in the Adventurer's guild and had heard of Asyubell before. He was such a legendary adventurer that a statue was built of him in front of the Adventurer's guild. Bread realised the document wasn't ordinary so he visited Redian and asked her to decipher it. Then he learned a surprising fact.

"This is..... Huge? You picked up something amazing!"

Redian explained in an excited voice.

"You've seen the explanation on Asyubell's statue in front of the Adventurer's guild? He travelled all over the world and collected items which he donated to the Adventurer's guild before disappearing. But this document states that Asyubell didn't donate everything to the guild. Asyubell chose the best items from his collection and hid it in one place. And he scattered hints to this place everywhere."

The document that Bread found was one of the clues. In his old age, Asyubell wanted to hide all the treasures he had found. Then he sent out a challenge to new adventurers who had a lot of knowledge and experience.

"Then the treasures of the legendary adventurer Asyubell.....?"

"Clearly it would be the finest items."

Redian smiled and spoke.

"Will you invite me as well?"

"I'll have to think about it."

"Don't be stupid. You wouldn't be able to find the treasure without my help. The clues Asyubell scattered are hidden behind puzzles. No matter how strong you are against monsters, it would be impossible for you to solve the puzzles. You can't even decipher this document."

"Sheesh, I understand. But it's 7:3." "6:4. I won't accept anything less than that. It will be difficult to find a better magician than me. If they decline then wouldn't rumours spread all over the place? More contenders for the treasure might appear. Isn't that right?"

"Ugh..... You're evil but okay. As long as you keep it a secret. Got it?"

"Hohoho, you might have a stone head but at least you can understand things like this."

"Why does it sound like you're taking advantage of me?"

“Calm down. Do you want to turn into a stone statue?”

“What the!”

Thus the barbarian and the magician started searching for the treasure. But finding the treasure of the legendary adventurer wasn't that easy. Asyubell's first clue gave a hint to the location of the next clue and they were hidden in absurd locations. Hidden deep in the nest of a herd of wyverns, a Medusa's temple where a person could be turned to stone with just one look and the lair of the horrifying Richi. They were areas that ordinary users wouldn't even dare go near. Bread and Redian had also died a few times and revived in the magic kingdom of Bristania. Every time they found a clue, the quest difficulty would also increase and now it was an +A difficulty. But the two of them became even more motivated as the difficulty increased. It was because the reward would become even bigger the more time and effort was invested into the quest. Just like that, one and a half months passed. The two of them had finally collected all the clues together and found the dungeon where Asyubell hid the treasure.

“Here? This is the place where Asyubell hid the treasure?”

Bread muttered as he saw the huge remains. In his later years, Asyubell had become senile and hidden his treasures. But the location was amazing compared to all the troubles they had gone through to reach the place.

“What the? There is nothing in the area. There are also no monsters. Is this really the right place?”

“It was recorded in the last clue document that it is somewhere around here. The place where three people are facing each other..... Ah, there it is. It should be the place where the gaze of the three statues is concentrated..... I've found it. This is clearly it. Advanced text deciphering!”

Redian found the ancient characters engraved on the ruins and used the skill. Then the characters started shining and a message window appeared.

-I am the nameless adventurer.

I have hidden the treasures found throughout my lifetime in the secret dungeon underneath the ruins. The person who has courage can visit it in order to get their hands on the treasure. But know this. I've used all my knowledge and experience to create this dungeon hiding my treasure. That's right. This dungeon is a challenge that I'm sending out to adventurers of the next generation. In order to obtain the treasure strength, stamina, wisdom and knowledge is required.

I'll say this in advance, but it might not be possible to obtain the treasure in your lifetime. If you make even one mistake on any of the puzzles..... The dungeon will remove all intruders and remained blocked until the next full moon. When it is opened, the location and answer to all the puzzles will be changed.

Now challenger, if you have confidence then you are welcome to try it!

"This annoying old man....."

"I've just smelled something bad."

Bread and Redian complained when they saw the message. But no matter how much they complained, Asyubell had already passed away a long time ago. Thus the two of them started searching the dungeon hidden underneath the ruins. Although there were no monsters near the ruins, there were an extraordinary number of high levelled monsters in the dungeon. However, the monsters weren't what annoyed them. The problem was they had to solve a puzzle every time they passed through a checkpoint. It was different from the typical puzzles seen in a dungeon.

"Oh my god, this gateway has a 5,000 piece jigsaw puzzle?"

"Huk, what's with the dots on the walls? We have to move them to form constellations?"

"Hik, this time we have to use an arithmetic equation to solve it?"

Although Redian had confidence in her intelligence, she felt like screaming with distress every time she saw a puzzle. But they've come this far so it wasn't possible to turn back. While Bread hunted all the monsters infesting the place, Redian searched through books and the internet for solutions to the problems. Luckily, she managed to find the necessary knowledge to solve the puzzles at each checkpoint. If it was just Bread then he wouldn't even know how the puzzle should be solved.

"Phew, it is really absurd. The puzzles are so difficult yet if I make a mistake then we'll have to start again from the beginning..... In addition, we would have to wait one month until the next full moon. Because the cycle of the moon is one month, just like in reality. If I fail then the dungeon will be locked..... If we came all the way here just to fail then I really will go crazy."

Redian's body trembled as she thought about it.

"So use all your power until the end."

"Sheesh! It's fine for you. All you have to do is swing your sword ignorantly. Ah, here it is. The inscription for the last checkpoint. Now, let's see. I hope it's a slightly easy puzzle this time..... Hik, w-what it this?"

"What is it?"

"T-this puzzle is a kabbalah."

Redian muttered with a sick expression. Of course the ignorant Bread couldn't understand what it was.

"Kabbalah? Is it similar to caramel?"

"You idiot, kabbalah is the cipher of the ancient alchemists. The characters are complicated..... No. Why am I expecting anything from you? Damn, what kind of dungeon did that guy create? To actually decipher a Kabbalah cipher in the game....."

Redian was about to have a fit of anger when she suddenly remembered something.

"It is fortunate. I know an older sister attending graduate school who is interested in the Kabbalah. Maybe I can actually solve it quickly this time. Wait a minute. I'll go and check it."

Redian wrote the inscription down and firmly instructed Bread.

"Please be quiet in the meantime. Don't touch anything even if you are bored. If you touch something and get us kicked out then I won't stay silent."

"Understood. Do you think that I'm an idiot?"

"This situation is too serious for you to act like a fool."

Redian declared sharply and cut off the connection. 2 hours passed before she connected again.

"Wow, I'm really tired."

"Why? You haven't figured it out?"

"No, I've solved it. When the person I know studying Kabbalah ciphers at the university saw this, she was speechless with admiration. It was the first time she saw something so complex. She asked me where I found something like this."

"Anyway, you've managed to solve it?"

"Yes, now we will pass the last checkpoint."

"Quickly, quickly open the door!"

Bread hopped impatiently around like a puppy after Redian's confident reply. It was reasonable. They were finally getting the treasure two months after the quest was received. Redian made a determined expression and tensed up.

"Now, let's start....."

Redian looked at her notes and raised her hand to the puzzle inscription.

Ku ku ku ku ku!

Abruptly, the dungeon started vibrating and the stone statues' eye turned red.

"What, what? What's going on?"

Bread burst out with confusion before a red message window appeared.

-You have failed the puzzle operation.

<Everybody in the dungeon will be expelled and access blocked until the next full moon>

"Huk, f-fail? Redian! What happened?"

"No, I don't know. I didn't even touch the inscription yet!"

Redian shouted with distress. The light in the statues' eyes flashed and shot towards the two of them. They instantly felt like they fell into the darkness. After a while, Bread looked around with despair in his eyes as the area around them slowly brightened.

"Outside..... We're outside. We really were banished."

"Two months..... Our two months of effort....."

Redian murmured weakly as she looked around with a blank expression. The two people felt like they were completely soulless.

"Calm down. Now everybody drink something and gather over here. A staff will check it out."

'Eh? Somebody's voice?'

Bread flinched at the voice and turned around. Dozens of people had gathered in the ruins where the dungeon was located and were making a fuss. Bread became even more confused as a blue NPC approached.

“Eh? Why didn’t we see you arrive? Are you tourists?”

“Tourists?”

Bread asked and the NPC smiled and explained.

“You must’ve wanted to visit here directly. Ever seen Seutandal rose, a lot of foreigners have appeared. That’s why we use the skyrays to let the tourists explore Seutandal safely. Would you like to try it out?”

For a while Bread couldn’t understand what the NPC was talking about. This was Seutandal, the place previously called the Netherworld. It was a perilous dungeon where one wrong touch would be disastrous so they would’ve set up countermeasures if it was on the continent. They would’ve hired mercenaries to prevent the entry of other people. But when the two people had entered the dungeon, Seutandal was still the Netherworld. Normal people wouldn’t find it even when walking around for a couple of days. Therefore Bread and Redian thought that countermeasures were unnecessary and just entered the dungeon without any worries. However, in the meantime Seutandal had risen and many tourists had flocked to the ruins.

“What did you say a while ago.....?”

“Ah, that? In fact, one of the tourists found a place that was similar to a dungeon. So they touched something..... All of a sudden this red light appeared and he was pushed out? Hahaha, don’t worry though. Fortunately, that person doesn’t appear to have any injuries..... Oh, please don’t misunderstand. Although there was an accident this time, I can guarantee that this place is safe for tourists.”

“Oooh!”

A moan emerged from Bread’s mouth at the NPC’s explanation. The stupid Bread hadn’t understood the situation until now. It was them. After two months, they had finally arrived at the last checkpoint. All that effort to solve the puzzles and obtain the treasure was undone by this stupid NPC and the tourists.

“Aaaagh, kill everybody!”

Bread shrieked and took out his bayonet. Although Bread had a stone head, he took pride in having the best combat power in Bristania!

"Hik, what are you doing? Aaaagh!"

"What's with that guy?"

"He killed the guide!"

"Huk, we were seen. Is he really going to kill us?" "Damn, is he crazy? Seutandal still has PK."

"But there's more than 10 of us. At most there's only one crazy guy....."

Bread reached the tourists and immediately swung his weapon. Among the tourists that came to Seutandal, some were around level 150 while others were level 250. It wouldn't be easy for the chaotic player to defeat them. That's what the tourists thought. However.....

"Huk, what, what the! What's with this enormous damage?"

"T-this bastard..... What on earth is his level? My sword can't even strike properly."

"His defense seems extremely high. Magic. Burn him with magic!"

"U-understood."

Then several magicians started chanting spells.

"Hohoho, take this! Damn, do you think I'm afraid of you? Do you know what you've done? How dare you say such things after what you've done? You want to use fire magic? Let's see whose fire magic is stronger! High speed incantation! The flaming hell..... The rest is omitted, Volcano!"

After Bread went crazy, Redian also started chanting spells at an incredible pace. At the same time the ground split open and lava gushed out, swallowing the tourists. It was enormous damage! There were 7 circles of magical flames.

"Huk, m-monster! A witch and a monster!"

The tourists' health was depleted in an instant and they ran away in every direction. However, Bread and Redian didn't stop attacking and wiped them all out in a matter of minutes.

"Huk huk huk, damn! My anger hasn't been released."

Bread panted as he pulled his weapon out of a dead body. Redian also nodded and replied.

"Of course not. How dare they touch the nose of the sleeping witch?"

"Eh? Your nose hair was touched?"

"Shut up, you stone head! Is this the time to make jokes? Shall I wash your eyes with lava?"

"No, there's no need for the lava."

"Damn....."

Redian chewed her lips with a poisonous expression.

"Let's think of the future. We have to destroy the tourist company who lead those fellows here. No, we won't let them relax for even a minute. That's right, wouldn't there be a guy who made the Netherworld rise? Yes, he's the ringleader of everything. We have to find him and smash him."

"Eh? Wouldn't the tourist business be unrelated to the guy who caused the Netherworld to rise?"

Bread scratched his head while Redian shot him a sharp look.

"What the? Don't you ever look at anything beyond the obvious?"

"No, I don't."

"So don't be a fool and just follow me. Anyway, we were banished and became chaotic because of him. Anyway, now that we're chaotic..... We'll chase him until the end of hell for our revenge! Hohoho, I'll teach him clearly who the white witch of Bristania is."

'Ah, nobody can stop her when Redian is in this state.'

Bread looked frustrated as he scratched his head.

'Well, I suppose it doesn't really matter. I have to relieve my stress somewhere. And it'll be good if I relieve it with someone strong. I don't know who it is but the person who raised the Netherworld should be fairly strong. Huhuhu, okay should I go along with Redian's plan for the moment?'

Swaaaaah, kkiruk, kkiruk.

The cries of the seagulls and crashing of the waves could be heard in a small city. It was the harbour town Reuben located on the east coast of Schudenberg. This place used to be a small unknown harbour but that had changed in recent times. The latest topics were focused on Seutandal in the East Sea. And Reuben was the closet harbour to Seutandal. Thus numerous users and NPCs headed towards Seutandal naturally flocked towards Reuben and it started booming.

“The ferry heading towards Seutandal will soon depart. All travellers who have bought tickets for Seutandal please wait by the dock. This ferry is the final one for today.”

The NPC manager of the liner shouted in a ringing voice. The ferry could carry 200 people at once and if a traveller was late then they would have to wait 4 hours for the one departing in the morning. The users started gathering after hearing the NPC’s voice. Meanwhile, the tall and skinny physique of a merchant could be seen.

“Damn, that’s dirty.”

The merchant complained as he glared at several users standing near the front. The merchant was Isyuram, who was the captain of the number 1 SWAT team in reality. And the users Isyuram was staring at were the members of his current party. There were several reasons why Isyuram had joined a party with them. Let’s go back in time to when Isyuram arrived in Giran.

Isyuram spent some time exploring around Giran. He wanted to find Sid who had stabbed him in the back and then ran away. However, Sid had left Giran as soon as his scam was finished so Isyuram had no choice but to give up.

“Damn, you’ll see soon. I’ll smash you the next time I see you!”

But Isyuram still didn’t know what kind of place New World was. Isyuram had inherited the character from his predecessor and had been stuck in a mountain village until now. So Giran was the first city he had been to. It was a merchant’s city. No, it wasn’t an exaggeration to say that it was the merchants’ battlefield! It was a city full of merchants who wouldn’t hesitate to run scams. The newly started Isyuram was just like food to them.

“Have you ever seen such good items?”

The merchant who approached him was one of those con artists. Of course, Isyuram might be ignorant but he wasn’t stupid. He was also a policeman so he knew various swindling methods. However, this was not reality. Although some swindling techniques were based off reality, others could only be used in New World. There were many scams using various skills or the game system! Isyuram didn’t

understand skills or the system so he was completely helpless. Just like that he lost money, bought something, lost money, sold something, lost money, drink alcohol, lost money.....

Thanks to that, Isyuram managed to lose most of his predecessor's money in just a fortnight. Isyuram sensed the looming crisis.

"If this goes on then I won't even be able to buy porridge."

Of course, there was a reason why Isyuram was hanging around Giran. Isyuram's purpose for playing the game was to find information about suspects on the police agency's list. However, Isyuram realized that he wouldn't be able to find anything just wandering around Giran aimlessly. Reality was reality while the game system was necessary in the game.

"As expected, the basis of the game is martial arts."

If he started from level 1 then he would've naturally learned the various skills and system information. But Isyuram started at level 150 with insufficient fundamental knowledge and money which he didn't know how to use. So Isyuram came to the conclusion that he had to learn the fundamentals of New World in order to survive. Since then Isyuram hunted in the daytime while in the evening he would go around to taverns or guilds to learn information about skills and the game system. It was grabbing every opportunity to improve himself. After a month, Isyuram was fortunately able to learn the basics.

"Huhuhu, what the, it doesn't seem that good. It's definitely not special."

While hanging around the taverns, he had started his adaptation training. In fact, Isyuram kept going to taverns to drink alcohol under the pretext of investigation. But so far, Isyuram couldn't understand the other users' words.

"Oh, the healer selection (if they can't control it then we'll kick them). Everyone goes together (a power run) and use the (maximum health increase skill) when there is a mob. If things get too heated behind enemy lines then we'll use (forced expulsion) and run away. There's no need to die."

Isyuram initially thought it was Chinese or Japanese. But he made a lot of effort to learn the game terminology that players used and eventually he started to understand. And Isyuram became a little more confident. However, he didn't understand that it was still dangerous even when he knew the system.

"Hey, you, I often see you at this tavern..... Are you a merchant? I'm starting a business which will get a lot of money. Unfortunately, I lack a bit of capital. How

about it? Would you be interested in investing? I promise that you'll get 30% of the profit after 3 days."

A merchant said after approaching him in the tavern. Of course, Isyuram wasn't as easily manipulated like he was in the past.

"I don't think so."

"Uh huh, please just listen to me. You're a merchant so don't you also need to live? Or is it that you don't believe me? That's probably it. But look at this. This is a contract officially signed by the merchant's guild. When the deal is finished then all the proceeds will be paid from the merchant's guild. And even if I make a mistake and become bankrupt, all the money you invested is secured by the merchant's guild. Do you believe me now?"

The merchant persistently showed the contract and Isyuram couldn't spot anything suspicious.

'Hrm, if the deal is written in the contract then there should be no problems. If I receive 30% of the profit then I can make money after a few days. Any profit is valuable to me.'

In the end, Isyuram signed the contract and handed over 200 gold. After a few days, he heard a sound that was like a lightning bolt striking him. Isyuram had invested a capital of 200 gold. He should've received 260 back. However, the money he received from the merchant's guild was only 26 gold. Isyuram went to the merchant and questioned him directly.

"What is going on?"

"What's going on? What do you mean?"

The merchant replied carefully.

"I've provided the money like the contract said. If you don't believe it then check again."

"The contract? What nonsense....."

Isyuram's face hardened and he took out the contract. The contract was clearly the same one as before. However, one zero was missing from the amount that Isyuram invested. Isyuram had actually invested 200 gold but the contract stated that he invested 20. Now Isyuram realized that he had been cheated again. When making the contract, the merchant had shown it many times. But he had failed to confirm the

real income when making the contract. The contract the merchant convinced Isyuram with was different from the one he was given. It was a common scam, also known as switching contracts. Isyuram became blank as he saw the contract and the merchant smirked.

“Think of it as a good experience. Would a merchant ever give away money?”

“You bastard.... Am I someone you can pour water on?”

Isyuram finally exploded. He might’ve laughed it off if he just started the game. 200 gold..... However, the previous 200 gold and this one was completely different. When he first inherited it from his predecessor, he didn’t know the value of gold. Thus he had casually drunk liquor worth a lot of gold. But after realizing the importance of gold, he had barely scraped together 200 gold.

“That was the money I earned in one month, while staying all up night and getting nosebleeds.....”

Isyuram grabbed the merchant’s throat and glared. Although he was a merchant in the game, he was still the person who made even gangsters tremble! He experienced more than ordinary people and the merchant paled from the glare. But after a moment, the merchant just laughed and said.

“Hey, hey, calm down. This is a city. Are you really going to use violence in a place like this?”

“Yes, I really am going to use violence!”

Isyuram already couldn’t see anything else. Isyuram instantly started beating the merchant up. When a fight occurred in the tavern, the guards immediately gathered. Then the merchant who was in a critical condition screamed and asked for help.

“Ugh, he, he..... He’s crazy. Save me!”

“Hey, what are you doing? You’ll be arrested if you don’t stop it!”

“Shut up, arrest me after I kill this guy!”

Isyuram stepped on the shoulder of a guard at a tremendous speed. Then he rotated as he fell and stepped on the merchant’s face.

“Cough!”

The guards could only watch with a dim expression as Isyuram kicked the merchant using flashy moves. After a while, the guards stopped being surprised and shoved his spear forward.

“You, you’re arrested for murder!”

“.....Dammit!”

Isyuram cursed and flopped down on the ground. Isyuram was still a merchant in New World. Although he was undergoing superman like training, it was still difficult for him to reach the level of warriors. It was be impossible for him to defeat the guards in Giran. In addition, he didn’t want to fight the guards since they were similar to the police. Isyuram folded his arms and shouted.

“My revenge has finished. Go ahead!”

Thus Isyuram was arrested and imprisoned for 15 days. Isyuram now felt completely desperate after being scammed so many times. But the turning point for Isyuram unexpectedly occurred inside the jail.

“A newcomer? How long do you have to stay in prison?”

“.....15 days.”

“That’s pretty bad. It’s been 10 days since I arrived but I have another 20 days.”

“What did you do?”

“Well, let’s see. PK. There was a fellow acting conceitedly so I killed him. Anyway, I became chaotic and just spent the next two months killing even more and raising my chaotic value. Huhuhu, well I made some profit during that time so I haven’t lost any money. I spent most of the time in here sleeping. I was alone for 10 days so it was quite boring.”

The user with a huge figure said with a smile.

“I was captured after being sought after for ages. But I have a few high levelled friends. I gave most of my stuff to them so I didn’t receive any damage. Oh, I forgot to introduce myself. I am Garam.”

Isyuram’s eyes suddenly flashed. The first thing Isyuram did before entering the game was confirming the ID of the suspects. Fortunately he had a good memory and he memorized the IDs of 100 users. Garam was on the list.

‘To meet a suspect in a place like this.....!’

Wasn't it similar to picking up money?

'But it's not really because of luck. Isn't it a habit? Someone chased by police in reality was definitely attempt murder in the game and be eventually sent to jail if caught. Anyway, this is an opportunity!'

Isyuram thoughts raced quickly. It wouldn't have been easy to approach if they had met somewhere else. But this place was a prison cell. He was stuck here for the next 15 days. Thus Isyuram started to raise his intimacy with Garam. They quickly became friends thanks to the small space. He learnt a lot about Garam by the time his prison sentence finished. However he didn't get the information he wanted.

As expected, an escaped criminal was unwilling to give any personal information.

'Asking persistently will be suspicious. I have to wait for when we become closer and a situation arises where we naturally exchange phone numbers. Or.....'

In order to arrest Garam in reality, he had to at least know his telephone number. The best way was to figure out his location from the number and make him confess directly. Of course, there were other ways but the Special Crimes Countermeasures chief felt like they were too risky.

'I can't be hasty. Garam currently belongs to the same organization as the other suspects. If I bring in Garam then those guys will become even more suspicious.'

After Isyuram finished his jail sentence, he continued to visit Garam while bringing food. During one of his visits, Garam suddenly asked Isyuram.

"But why are you so shabby? Aren't you also covered in blood? What's going on?"

"No, I've just been hunting a little bit."

"Hunting? Why is a merchant hunting?"

Garam mumbled around the food in his mouth as he raised his head.

"Wait, you.....you said you entered the jail because of a swindle but you're still buying these foods for me..... Then don't tell me you..... Bounty hunting.....!"

"Please don't pay attention to it. I find it enjoyable."

Isyuram scratched his head with an awkward expression. That's right. Isyuram had engaged in hunting monsters and delivering them for money. As a merchant, Isyuram would need a certain amount of skills to catch the monsters. And he

deliberately came to the jail covered in blood and dirt. It was one of his strategies to make Garam notice him. As expected, Garam was completely impressed.

“Ohhh, so there are also people like this.....”

“Please don’t sound like that. We’re cellmates.”

“Thank you, I will definitely pay you back. If I lose my sense of loyalty then I’ll be nothing but a corpse.”

“Things like that..... Are a little bittersweet.”

“Huh? What?”

“In fact, I’m not very sociable. Apart from you, I don’t know anyone in New World. That’s why I’ve been visiting you but you’ll be released in a few days. Later, I’ll be a lonely person again. Besides, my luck is so bad that I’ll probably be scammed again or PKed.”

Isyuram sighed while looking pitiful. Then Garam banged his chest and said.

“Don’t worry about it. Right? I’m a corpse if I lose my loyalty. I’ll shoulder responsibility for you from now on. Didn’t I tell you before? I know quite a lot of colleagues. Many of these guys are currently in Seutandal which is a new area so there will be a lot of profit. I’m going to join them after leaving jail. You can come with us.”

“I can come? Even though I’m a merchant?”

“It’s okay. We also need a large number of bags so those guys won’t say no. And who would say no to my friend? What do you think?”

“I’m very thankful!”

So Isyuram’s 20 days of effort paid off. If they were Garam’s colleagues then they would definitely be wanted criminals.

‘Hopefully things will unravel smoothly.’

After several days, Garam finally left jail. After eating the tofu Isyuram prepared, he followed Garam to look for the suspects. The place where he arrived at was Reuben’s port. Garam met up with two of his colleagues here. Takosu and Rokon. They were also wanted criminals on the suspects list.

"It's been a while, Garam. We've finished the preparations so were just waiting for you."

"But who is this with you?"

"A friend of my heart. I've decided let him accompany me in the from now on."

".....Can we trust him?"

"What the? Are you doubting a friend of my heart?"

Garam completely believed in Isyuram so he became angry at those words. Takosu and Rokon wore doubtful expressions but eventually nodded.

"Okay, if you say so..... Let's depart. Jepeteu hyung is waiting. The other guys have joined so only you are left."

Thus, Isyuram managed to join the criminals heading towards Seutandal.

'Huhuhu, my work is finally progressing. Isyuram's game is now starting!'

Isyuram smirked and headed towards the boat.

"Hahaha, out of the way, out of the way! I'm first!"

Garam headed like a bull towards the boat. There was only one plank connecting the ferry and pier so there was no space to move with 200 people gathered. Everything became a mess after Garam ran for the pier. Although people cursed at him, Garam just stared at them and threatened them.

"What the? Do you have a complaint about me going on the boat first? If you're dissatisfied then come out!"

'That guy, he really can't give up his habit.'

Isyuram shook his head. It was going to be really tiring travelling with Garam and his colleagues. He was a guy who lived selfishly and would easily pick fights if dissatisfied. Garam's character was just as brutal as he was in reality and he was happiest when users were bleeding.

"Heh, none of them dare..... Huh? What the, that is?"

Garam glared as he noticed something. While Garam was being careless, somebody had started boarding the ship.

"That bastard..... Hey, you. Didn't you hear me? I said I was first!

Garam snorted and grabbed the person's shoulder. The guy lost his balance and fell into the ocean.

"Hahaha, good. What an impertinent brat!"

Garam chuckled as he started to head up the ship.

".....Do you want to die?"

Garam flinched and turned his head as he heard the voice. The man who had fallen into the ocean and pulled himself out and was heading towards Garam.

'Damn! That Garam, he should learn some moderation. It has become troublesome. I should stop it before it becomes bigger.'

Isyuram finally looked at the man with annoyance. But then his eyes became bigger than a pot lid.

'What, what the? T-that guy..... Don't tell me..... Hik, that's right. Hyun-woo!'

The one heading towards Garam was Hyun-woo, also known as Ark.

Act 4: Mentor and Disciple

Isyuram reflexively hid himself. When he peeked stealthily at them, he saw that the person definitely resembled Hyun-woo.

'That face is definitely Hyun-woo's. Damn, to meet him in a place like this!'

He never even told Ark that he was playing the game. The reason he was hiding it from Ark was because he didn't want him to know that Isyuram was a merchant.

"What did you say?"

Then Garam spoke in an intimidating voice. But Ark didn't even blink and just muttered.

"Are you deaf?"

"What?"

Garam's face hardened.

"Hmm, do you have a facial muscle disorder? Or maybe a person with disabilities. If I knew beforehand then I would've conceded."

"Disabled person? H-h-how dare this bastard say that?"

"A stutter? This is serious. Oh, I am sorry. I never knew it was that serious."

Isyuram marvelled at the sarcasm rolling off Ark's tongue.

'He had this sarcastic side to him?'

Isyuram had thought of Ark as a reticent person. Had Ark's character changed in the game? Anyway, the situation was quite bothersome. In fact, Garam's nature meant that he angered easily. And he had started fights a few times. Isyuram had thrown his whole body and managed to prevent the previous ones. Of course, it wasn't because of Garam. Currently Isyuram was using Garam to infiltrate and investigate the suspects. If Garam killed someone and became chaotic then all his efforts would go to waste. It was also the same if Garam died. Luckily Garam called Isyuram a friend of his heart so he always stepped down when Isyuram interfered. But it was different if his opponent was Ark.

'If Hyun-woo calls my name then I'll be unable to infiltrate the group..... However, I can't just watch them..... Damn, what should I do?'

Isyuram looked at Takosu and Rokon to try and request help. But the nature of humans was for similar people to flock together. They just watched the scene with interest. So Isyuram was on his own.

"This mannerless brat!"

Ark had fully incited Garam's rage, making Garam throw a punch at him. Garam was a warrior who used knuckles with blades attached as his weapon. Wasn't the feeling of punching someone more exhilarating? Garam had proudly recited that in his jail cell. Garam was a hooligan familiar with street fighting. Isyuram remembered that Garam's criminal record was attempted murder after swinging his fist at people. As expected, that power was also applied to New World. The speed and power of that fist couldn't be underestimated.

Bakak-!

Ark's jaw was forced upwards as he was hit by the fist. At that moment a spark sprang into Isyuram's eyes.

‘What is he doing? He was hit by a fist like that? What has he learned so far?’

No matter the situation, Ark was still Isyuram’s disciple. Naturally he would feel angry after seeing his student being hit. Garam’s fist was beyond ordinary, but it wasn’t to the extent that Ark couldn’t avoid it after training in the gym. He had the capabilities but he didn’t avoid it. All he could think was that Ark had become dull because of fear. But why would Isyuram’s disciple be afraid of a mere hooligan? It was because Isyuram still didn’t know New World that well.

“You hit me?”

Ark rubbed his bloody mouth and laughed. The first attack had an important meaning in New World. The person who attacked first and killed the opponent would 100% become chaotic. However, the person who was attacked first wouldn’t become chaotic if they killed that person. That’s why Ark didn’t avoid the attack. As expected, Garam’s name became grey after he attacked Ark. Now it was counted as self-defence if he killed Garam.

“I hit you, what about it?”

Garam rushed back and threw a punch again. Ark instantly used some quick footwork and the punch missed. In a blink of an eye, he had managed to get behind Garam. At that moment, Ark used rapid-fire kicks. Low kick, high kick and spinning kick!

“Heok, t-this bastard...!”

Garam wobbled and grabbed Ark. But Ark had trained in wrestling against a bronze medal winner of a national tournament. The moment Garam’s hand touched his shoulder, he instantly counterattacked by rotating his body and knocking Garam down onto the ground.

‘Right, right, well done. He is indeed my disciple. He must’ve been playing around earlier.’

Isyuram had forgotten the circumstances and inwardly clapped.

“Kuaaak..... Okay, now let’s do this properly!”

“Properly? That’s good.”

Ark smiled at Garam’s words and took out his sword. Isyuram suddenly remembered when he saw the gleam of the sword.

'Ah, now isn't the time for this. Damn! That Hyun-woo, he's stronger than I thought..... I'll be in trouble if Garam dies! Without Garam, Roco and Takosu would never bring me to their colleagues' meeting place. But it'll be over if I'm found by Hyun-woo.....'

Isyuram held his head and frantically worried. Suddenly an image of a thin merchant was reflected off an onlooker's shield. Isyuram looked at the shield for a long time before realizing that it was his image. Yes, he had forgotten since there were no mirrors in the game but Isyuram's features were completely different from his real life image. Of course, there was no way for Ark to recognize him.

"Stop, stop, Garam!"

After having the thought, Isyuram immediately ran between the two of them. But Ark and Garam were already exchanging fists. The two of them tried to stop attacking when Isyuram got between the two of them but it was already too late.

"Heok, what is this.....?"

"Isyuram, it's dangerous!"

Ark and Garam both shouted with confusion at the same time. But what happened afterwards was the truly confusing part. Isyuram smoothly parried Garam's fist with one hand while raising one leg to raise Ark's wrist upwards. Even though Ark and Garam had tried to stop their attacks, it was still a merchant intervening between two warriors. In fact, sometime of this degree wasn't difficult for Isyuram. Although his attack and defense couldn't compare to a warrior's, he was unmatched in terms of technique. Of course, it was a game so 100% of his real life skills weren't applied. Thanks to the situations he had gone through, Isyuram had long ago mastered the evasion skill 'Parry.' Unlike other users, he felt the pain and consequently figured out how to parry with the least force while investigating the skill.

"A-are you okay? You're not injured?"

Garam hurriedly asked Isyuram.

"Yes, I'm fine."

"What are you doing? Why would a merchant interfere in a fight? Fortunately you were lucky this time, but if the blows landed then your life would be at risk. How could I live with killing a friend of my heart?"

Garam never even considered that Isyuram had managed to evade both of the attacks. That was because a common gangster knowing such a high standard of technique was impossible.

"I'm sorry but let's stop this. Hey you, why don't you let it go?"

"That's....."

Ark gave Isyuram a funny look before shrugging his shoulders. However Garam roughly shook his head.

"No, this time you can't stop it. That asshole, I'm going to smash him!"

"It is a request. If you cause a disturbance here then you can't meet your colleagues."

"B-but that bastard.....!"

"Are you going to give up or fight? I'm a little busy."

"Look, look! Did you hear him? That bastard keeps on insulting me!"

Garam's shoulders moved up and down as he shouted while Ark yawned.

"Stop!"

At that moment, the harbour guards broke through the crowd and came running up.

"This is the harbour that Lord Reuben manages. If you cause a disturbance then you'll be immediately arrested."

"Dammit....."

Garam frowned and spat out curses. Now Takosu and Rokon finally approached them.

"Garam, let's end it here. I said that Jepeteu hyung is waiting. It'll be annoying if you're confined here."

".....Understood."

Garam stared at Ark for a moment before heading onto the ship. Ark also nodded and retreated when the guards looked at him. Thus the situation was cleared up for the moment. The other users also started to board the ship. When all the passengers finished boarding, the ship captain appeared and laughed as he spoke.

"Young ones, everybody listen up. My sailors won't get involved in any fights on land. But they'll tie you up and throw you into the sea if anything happens on the boat. Now we're going to depart. Plot the course!"

The ship's crew responded to their captain's command and hurriedly rushed around. The sails were then opened and the voyage to Seutandal had begun.

"Sheesh, I feel dirty. If only the guards had come a little bit later."

Garam grunted with dissatisfaction while sitting on the deck. Then Takosu grinned and muttered.

"You didn't have to get so angry."

"There are many schoolkids like him who don't have manners. If I disregarded a schoolkid then wouldn't you make fun of me? Ugh, I get mad every time I think about it."

"It's not the end."

Takosu approached Garam and spoke in a low voice.

"We have the same destination as that guy. Do you understand? Even if the guards hadn't appeared, if you killed him then you wouldn't have been able to take the ship. But it's different once we arrive in Seutandal."

"What? Then?"

"Huhuhu, The harbour is separated from Haman Fortress, which is the heart of Seutandal. And there aren't that many guards at the harbour. If we attack him as soon as the boat arrives, we can kill him before the guards show up. Anyway, Jepeteu hyung is in the field so it isn't necessary to enter a city. Besides, if he's killed in Seutandal then wouldn't that guy be even madder when he is resurrected in Reuben?"

"Oh, that's quite good?"

Garam laughed with sparkling eyes.

"So in the meantime, let's get down to our cabin and play poker. We'll leave the revenge for later."

"Okay, as expected from you. Huhuhu, let's look forward to it."

Garam, Takosu and Rokon all smiled wickedly before standing up. Indeed, a bad guy in reality was still a bad guy in the game.

“Isyuram, do you want to play poker?”

“No, the inside is slightly uncomfortable for me. I’ll prefer to stay on the deck where there is the wind.”

Isyuram made excuses to separate from the group and headed towards the deck. Takosu looked at his back and asked in a slightly suspicious voice.

“That guy, isn’t his behaviour suspicious? Doesn’t that guy know our plans now?”

“What are you saying? I told you that Isyuram is a friend of my heart. There is no reason for you to doubt him.”

“.....Well, I suppose we’ll know if he’s a reliable guy when we arrive. Let’s go.”

Once Isyuram confirmed that they entered the cabin, Isyuram immediately acted like Takosu suspected and searched for Ark. After looking around for a while, he saw Ark waiting by the rails. Ark naturally glanced to the side when Isyuram approached.

‘Hmmm, what should I say?’

Isyuram worried for a moment before muttering.

“That kick before was quite acceptable. What martial arts have you learnt?”

“Taekwondo.”

‘Eh? What a short reply.’

It was Hyun-woo’s face so Isyuram became angry when Ark spoke such curt words.

‘Well, he does only know me as Garam’s colleague. Huhuhu, yes, so this guy really doesn’t recognize me? I suddenly have a funny idea. Yes, this situation makes me want to try it out.’

“It seems like you’ve been practicing for a long time. After seeing that posture, did you stop for a while? Then you’ve started receiving training from a mentor for one year. Am I correct?”

“H-how?”

Ark flinched and turned his head around as he nodded.

“Well, I’m at a standard where I can tell just by looking at your posture.”

“Then it wasn’t an accident when you interrupted the attack before……?”

“Oh, you noticed it?”

Isyuram looked startled. Although it was slightly exaggerated, he was still surprised. Isyuram used an advanced technique because he knew that Garam wouldn’t recognize it or become suspicious. Only people with keen eyes could recognize the technique. He honestly thought that Ark hadn’t noticed.

“Although receiving no damage might be because of a skill, but isn’t the movement unrelated to the skill? Haven’t you also learnt martial arts?”

His words had instantly become longer. Isyuram deliberately shivered before replied.

“Well, I didn’t learn as much as other people.”

“Then why did a person like you pick a merchant?”

“Isn’t the warrior originally strong? I wanted to completely rule over my mind and body in the worst situation. My mentors are Ryu and Ken, Chun-Li and Zangief…….”

Isyuram once again started talking nonsense. Yes, Isyuram was putting on his crazy act that normal people would yell at him to retire already. But Ark listened seriously and immediately his gaze brightened when Ryu and Ken were mentioned. Ark loved street fighting games so he absolutely knew those names. Anyway, Isyuram became embarrassed and coughed before speaking.

“Hum hum, well anyway, your steps still seem a little weak. The foot which you are using as an axis to turn is more important than the kicking leg. It isn’t bad now of course, but your kicks will become more powerful when your legs are more stable. Didn’t your teacher also say this?”

“How did you know?”

“Huhuhu, any good teacher would’ve mentioned it.”

Isyuram answered playfully with a smirk.

“If I look at the disciple then I can determine the teacher’s skill. You apparently have a wonderful teacher. The accuracy and sharpness of your techniques is beyond the

usual level. There aren't that many people in South Korea with this degree of technique. What kind of person is your teacher?"

"Teacher....."

Ark suddenly looked at the horizon with vague eyes. It had already been 3 months since he had seen Ark in reality. Although there was no time to consider Ark while playing game, occasionally he remembered Ark. Since Hyun-woo couldn't recognize his face, Isyuram half-jokingly asked Ark how he felt about his teacher. But that feeling didn't even last 1 minute.

"My teacher is a cruel man. His hobby is blindly beating me up and he won't even raise an eyebrow if his student sheds blood or tears. Ever since I started at the gym, I'm constantly amazed that I'm still alive."

"B-but all that is to forge the student. Isn't that right?"

"That's right. The problem is that he's trying to turn a human into a superman."

'This, is this how that child normally thinks of me?'

Isyuram inwardly fumed at Ark's answer. Isyuram now wanted to suddenly shout 'your teacher is here!' and beat him to death. Although his fury was like a big bang inside his head, he was forced to push it down.

"Isn't there any good points? Think closely. There should be at least one. There is no way he has no good points."

"Let's see?"

Isyuram endured his anger while waiting for Ark's reply, but he was still furious.

'In the future, I'll call him to the gym and flatten him into a rice cake!'

"I caught something! Oh, isn't this a big fish?"

At that moment, someone shouted from one side. It took 4 hours to arrive at Seutandal. After observing the stunning scenery for a while, most players became bored and started fishing. Ark pricked his ears as he heard and waited for the fish to be reeled in before approaching.

"Wow, what a great scup. Could you entrust this to me? I'll make sashimi and spicy seafood stew in an instant. Originally I would get a small fee for the labour but you're the first guest so I'll do it for free."

“Eh? Really?”

The user expressed their joy and extended the fish. Fishing was a common skill learnt by users. That’s because a groundless rumour spread on the information site that master fishermen had rare accessories. On the other hand, a lot of ingredients were required for cooking and the dishes produced weren’t that much different from the ones sold in the stores. Therefore there were many users who learnt how to fish but hardly any who knew how to cook the fish. Ark had waited on the deck because he was aiming for this market. Ark took out his knife and showed amazing workmanship as he sliced it into sashimi before boiling the rest. Start-ups were the most important thing in running a business. Thanks to the use of fresh ingredients and skill, he was able to create amazing sashimi and spicy seafood stew.

-The Survival Cooking dish ‘Best Scup Sashimi’ has been created.

Sashimi created from freshly caught scup. It is a relatively simple dish that heavily relies on the abilities of the chef. Thanks to the skills of an experienced chef, the best taste and sensation of the flesh has been produced.

<Stamina +10, Satiety +15%>

<A la carte bonus: Stamina +3, Mana +200, Satiety +10%>

-The Survival Cooking dish ‘Best Scup Spicy Seafood Stew’ has been created.

A dish using the boiled freshly caught scup and various other ingredients. It is a dish that can have an intense fishy smell, but the taste is simple thanks to the experienced chef.

<Strength +12, Satiety +20%>

<A la carte bonus: Strength +2, Health +400, Satiety +15%>

“Now, please eat.”

“Wow, this is no joke.”

The user immediately exclaimed after trying Ark’s sashimi and seafood stew.

“Wow, this is unbelievable..... Although he dismantled the scup at an amazing speed, the flesh isn’t damaged at all! The scup tastes as sweet as caramel! And this spicy seafood stew! Although I saw him put so many ingredients in, they’re all perfectly balanced! It’s also good for the body. What’s with these astounding stat bonuses after eating the dish? I’ve never seen such a large stat increase from food!”

The user who caught the scup clamoured away like he was the judge of a cooking show. The users watching started panting as they smelled the enticing scent.

“Hey, could you make it into sashimi if I catch a fresh fish?”

“Of course. Apart from sashimi and spicy seafood stew, I’ll make anything such as sweet and sour fish and fresh fish soup. If you need the stat bonus then you can also carry it around as dried seafood. The spices are also easy to add.”

“Oh, then you can create shark fin soup if we catch a shark?”

“Tuna? Tuna sushi?”

The questions from the players poured out. In fact, Ark had learnt all methods of cooking fish while travelling in the underwater world. There were no dishes made from fish that he couldn’t produce. Ark smiled and nodded.

“All the types of cooking you asked are available. However, I need to use various ingredients and spices while cooking. So ordering the dish will cost 20 silver while any extra condiments will cost 10 silver.”

Most of the players heading towards Seutandal were level 200 or higher. 10~20 silver was like the price of gum to them.

“That’s not a problem.”

“Fish, let’s catch some fresh fish!”

The users started taking out their fishing rods. Since the users had no cooking skills, there was nowhere they could use the fish they caught. Although it was possible to sell it to a store, they would only get a few silver at best. Plus seafood had a quick expiration date so there were many times when it became trash ingredients. Now that Ark could cook it instantly, the users started frantically fishing.

“A fresh fish. I’ll pay 30 silver for it!”

“I’ll give 50 silver.”

“2 gold for a red sea bream and halibut!”

The users who hadn’t learnt fishing frantically ran around the deck buying fish. Thanks to that, the silver value of the fish jumped by 10 times. Ark had timed his business strategy for the evening when the users were hungry.

‘What’s all this fuss?’

Isyuram looked at Ark with a perplexed expression. Due to the users constantly fishing on the deck, there was no time for Ark to rest at all. Thus 3 hours passed like that. The users on the boat had finally filled their stomachs. During that time, Ark had created over 200 dishes. He had earned 30 gold just from cooking the fish.

“Huhuhu, as I expected.”

Ark tapped his pocket and smiled happily. In fact, Ark hadn't felt that good until now. It was because he had to waste 1,400 gold buying the Summoning Port from the Magic Institute in Giran. That wasn't all. Initially it cost 7 gold for a trip to Seutandal but now it had increased to 12 gold. The price had gone up a lot thanks to all the users flocking. Therefore Ark only had a few copper coins left. Thus the weight of his pocket had changed. If he fell into the ocean when his purse was heavy then he wouldn't be that angry. Of course, he would still be mad but he wanted to avoid attention so he would've endured it. Anyway, he now had 30 gold in his pocket so he was in a better mood.

“I'll give you this fish so please make sashimi for me.”

At that moment, Isyuram extended a flatfish towards Ark. Once Ark made the sashimi, Isyuram tried it and instantly exclaimed in his head.

‘Ohh, who knew this guy had such a talent? Huh? What the?’

Isyuram suddenly tilted his head while eating the sashimi. After the customers had all disappeared, Ark crouched down and his gaze was riveted on the flatfish sashimi. While he was watching, an audible growling sound was heard from Ark's stomach. Although he had cooked hundreds of pieces of fish, Ark had been unable to eat even one piece.

“What the? Are you hungry?”

Nod.

“Couldn't you also buy a fresh fish to cook?”

“I don't have any money.”

Isyuram's face contorted at Ark's answer. He had just seen 30 gold enter his pocket so how could Ark say he had no money? Isyuram was already angry at Ark so he shoved the remaining pieces into his mouth. Ark just sighed with an even more pitiful expression. The idea had been petty so Isyuram felt even more sorry after he did it.

'Did I have to act so petty? That reminds me, isn't this guy playing the game to pay for his mother's hospital bills? Ah, damn. Of course it's not possible for him to part with his money.....'

Isyuram clicked his tongue with an uncomfortable expression at the idea that he hadn't behaved like an adult. How much time had passed? The sun had started to set and the horizon was dyed with red.

The starving Ark grabbed the ship's rail, looked at the sunset and spoke in a sentimental voice.

".....That's it."

"What?"

"The answer to the question you previously asked. Teacher's good points. Rather than a good point, it had been 3 months since I've gone to the gym. Teacher called and said there were circumstances. Now I'm just waiting for the day that Teacher will return. "

Isyuram's face became serious after hearing Ark's words. He could see the sincerity in the eyes and facial expression.

'Damn, this guy..... Being serious all of a sudden..... I feel even sorrier.....'

Isyuram roughly scratched his head and turned around. Then he spoke like he just remembered.

"Oh, I had something to say. The guy you fought a while ago and his friends will ambush you in Seutandal. It will be difficult for you to handle three people alone. If you don't want to die then you should stay on the ship when it is docked. If you're with the sailors then they won't attack you. Please trust me. I'm not their friend."

Isyuram went to the railing after he spoke. Then he handed over 1 gold where a user was still fishing.

"Did you see the person cooking a while ago? Please give two fish to him and don't tell him it was from me. Just say it's a gift."

Isyuram then hid next to the cabins and watched Ark. Ark instantly cooked the fish and ate it. In fact, Ark hadn't bought the fish because of a lack of money. Even if they were inexpensive ingredients procured nearby, it was still wasting ingredients. In addition, eating inside the game wouldn't fill his belly. One fish cost 20 silver so it

was better to just eat rice in real life. Anyway, Isyuram also became satisfied after seeing Ark eat the food happily.

‘As expected, a mentor has to look after his disciple. Huhuhu, I really am a good guy. I’ve also warned Hyun-woo about Garam. Huh? Which reminds me, what was Hyun-woo’s ID? How did that happen? Well, I’ll just ask for his ID later.’

Isyuram headed towards the cabin with a cool expression. When he reached the cabin Garam, Takosu and Rokon were still playing poker. Garam was frowning as he already lost a lot of money. But Isyuram wasn’t interested in poker and just sat in the corner.

How much time had passed?

“All passengers please gather on the deck, we have arrived in Seutandal!”

“There it is!”

“Let’s go!”

Garam rose and ran to the deck.

“Wait a minute, that guy might sense we’re targeting him if he sees us. We’ll hide near the corner and attack once we confirm he got off the boat.”

Takosu hid his body behind the door of a cabin and looked carefully. Meanwhile, the ferry finally entered Seutandal’s port.

“Okay, all passengers prepare to leave the ship!”

The captain’s loud voice had the crew moving. As soon as the plank connecting the ferry and pier was lowered, the players began entering Seutandal. But Ark hesitated and looked around.

“What the, why isn’t that guy getting off?”

“Did he notice? Or maybe someone told him beforehand while we were in the cabin.....”

Takosu looked at Isyuram with suspicious eyes. Then Rokon who had been staring at Ark shook his head.

“He’s going down!”

“See, I told you to trust Isyuram.”

Garam complained towards Takosu who coughed and nodded.

“Okay, I’m sorry I doubted him.”

“No, its okay since today is the first time you’ve met me.”

Isyuram replied but his thoughts were confused.

‘Jeez, didn’t that Hyun-woo listen to what I said before? Why the hell is he descending? Damn, Hyun-woo won’t be able to survive against Garam’s group no matter how high his level. Furthermore, in such a situation I can only quietly watch.’

“Now, let’s go!”

Then Takosu, Garam and Rokon proceeded as planned. Isyuram had no choice but to go with them.

‘This is impossible. I’ll feel sorry if Hyun-woo gets injured but I have no choice but to stick with them.’

The group took out their weapons as they crossed the deck. Then they tried to stab his back as Hyun-woo stepped foot on Seutandal. It was the backstab attack of four high levelled users! Ark quickly flew back and lost 40% of his health.

“Hahaha! Take that you bastard!” “Then let’s see you take this……. Eh?”

Garam had approached Ark and was raising his fist when he suddenly stopped. Takosu and Rokon also looked around with confusion. 100 people had gathered by the dock. This wasn’t the regular group made of passengers. Armed with armour and sword, the people with blue skin were the Baran clan of the Eastern Nation. They were the inhabitants of Seutandal. The Baran clan of the Eastern Nation were holding a sign saying ‘Welcome Commander!’ and shaking it.

In fact, Ark hadn’t paid any attention to Garam. Although normally he would be wary of Garam, Seutandal was Ark’s home ground these days. If Ark was attacked then the residents as well as the guards would notice. And even if they weren’t there, Ark was confident that he could deal with Garam alone. The reason that Ark had hesitated and remained on the ship until the end was because of the Baran clan. Ark had called JusticeMan before leaving for Seutandal. He conveyed the necessary information to Beseutyu beforehand. After hearing the news, the Baran clan wanted to come out and greet him. In order to avoid the attention of the other users, Ark had waited until all the passengers scattered. But then Ark suddenly collapsed while they were cheering. The Baran clan paused in their trumpeting and their pupils’ shone.

"What the, what's with those guys? Are they crazy?"

"How dare they swing their swords at Seutandal's saviour!"

"They must want to die."

"We don't need to see anything else. Attack them!"

The soldiers flocked in front of the collapsed Ark.

"Huk, what, what the?"

Damn, what on earth is going on?"

"What is that guy's identity? Ahuk! Ugh!"

Garam, Takosu and Rokon were surrounded by soldiers and died in a blink of an eye. The 100 eyes then turned towards Isyuram. Isyuram flinched and hurriedly raised his hand before shouting.

"W-wait. I'm not an enemy!"

"Don't talk nonsense, we saw you attack with the others!"

"Kill him, he is their accomplice."

"I-it's true! If you don't believe me then ask him!"

The soldiers approached Ark after hearing Isyuram's words. Ark just sneaked a glance at Isyuram and tapped his stomach before laughing pleasantly.

"Flatfish."

"W-what? Huk, I..... Don't tell me you're still hung up about that?"

"Grudges over food can be frightening."

"Wait, I'm the one who asked that fisherman....."

Isyuram quickly tried to explain but the soldiers didn't listen. Although Ark and the soldiers had a high degree of intimacy, NPCs wouldn't randomly attack users. If it was a normal user, they wouldn't attack even if Ark commanded them to. However, Isyuram had attacked Ark so his name was grey. That alone was justification for the soldiers to attack Isyuram. As the target had been Ark, there was no need for the soldiers to discuss the situation.

“Attack because of the flatfish!”

“I don’t know what the commander is taking about but there’s clearly a grudge!”

“He is clearly the enemy!”

The angry soldiers gathered around Isyuram. The captain of the number 1 SWAT team? Representative of the national taekwondo team? None of that mattered. Isyuram couldn’t do anything to prevent being killed by the 100 soldiers.

‘Oh my god, I’ve been stepped on by followers of my disciple……’

However, Isyuram was lucky that he died. Although his death was delayed, Garam still trusted Isyuram after he died. If Isyuram had survived then he would’ve been suspected by the others after they resurrected. Anyway, Isyuram’s infiltration mission was still continuing!

Act 5: Seutandal’s Hero

[TL: For people who read the previous chapter when I first uploaded it, I’ve edited it a little bit so that Haman fortress is actually close to the harbour. Not far away. Ark also finally used a male pronoun for Radun in this chapter so from now on I will use male pronouns for Radun instead of gender neutral.]

“Bah, trying to trick me?”

Ark muttered as he snorted. Ark hadn’t believed Isyuram in the slightest. If Isyuram really wanted to stop the fight between Ark and Garam then he should’ve done it in Reuben. However, Isyuram just watched the fight and jumped in when Garam was having difficulty. It was obvious that he was trying to protect Garam.

‘Yet he dares say they’re not colleagues?’

So Ark had doubted Isyuram when he approached for the first time. He was clearly trying some scheme since it was obvious they weren’t as strong as Ark. Wasn’t that why he quietly leaked information as they approached Seutandal?

‘They clearly plotted to keep me on the boat. I don’t know why they want me on the boat but there is clearly a hidden scheme. I don’t know what types of methods exist in New World so I should always be careful.’

Their goal was to prevent Ark from leaving the boat. Then obviously he had to leave the boat to prevent their scheme. Ark was confident against that group so he just ignored Isyuram’s warning. And after he was surprised, Ark immediately checked Isyuram’s name with Eyes of the Cat. Grey..... Isyuram had also stabbed Ark in the back. Thus Ark was convinced that his idea was correct.

‘As expected, he is accomplices with Garam!’

Ark was also angry that Isyuram ate the flatfish sashimi by himself. Eventually distrust and doubts caused a tragic incident. Anyway, he had no time for these trivial matters. There were many people like Garam in New World who wanted to pick fights for no reason. In any case, Ark erased the incident at the harbour from his memory.

‘There’s no need to pay attention to such things in the game. Anyway, this place really has changed.’

Ark exclaimed as he looked around the harbour and Haman Fortress. Seutandal had rapidly changed in just four days. When Ark left for Giran, there were only 10 wooden buildings around the harbour while the foundation around the castle was still being constructed. But Haman was the heart of Seutandal. Thanks to the ongoing flow of users, construction of hotels and inns were in full swing. Of course, there were still areas that needed attention but it was only a matter of time. After the construction was completed and the system updated, Haman would be transformed into a great city. A large bulletin board at the entrance of the fortress caught his eye.

-Welcome to Haman Fortress!

This is a small guide for first time visitors.

The inhabitants of Seutandal, the Baran clan suffered under the threat of the wicked Nakujuk for a long time. Not too long ago the Nakujuk invaded and slaughtered thousands of Baran, causing a tragic incident. Fortunately, a great leader led the Baran clan and constructed Haman fortress to oppose the Nakujuk.

Hooray our great leader!

“Huhuhu, great leader..... My face feels a little hot.”

The great leader written on the board was Ark. Ark had learned many things from watching Alan. Alan turned into a celebrity in Schudenberg after his appearance on TV. But Ark decided that it wasn't a good thing. In this world, there were many people who would feel envious of someone who did well. Becoming a celebrity was no different from becoming an enemy. If Alan wasn't so famous then he wouldn't have been ruined so much. Ark had no intention of going down Alan's route. Therefore he thoroughly hid his name and appearance. That was also why the welcoming committee hadn't placed Ark's name on the sign.

'It will become more troublesome if I'm a celebrity.'

Ark praised his foresight as he passed by the people reading the bulletin.

-Sadly, the threat of the Nakujuk still hasn't disappeared. Therefore Isabel, the representative of Seutandal is asking for the help of courageous adventurers. Adventurers who fight for justice against the Nakujuk will receive a token whenever they kill one. When they provide proof of the 'Nakujuk's red hair,' compensation will be provided.

* Compensation for hunting 10 Nakujuk (Copper medal: without this medal, you won't be able to trade at Haman Fortress.) * Compensation for hunting 50 Nakujuk (Silver medal: 10% discount on all shop trades)

* Compensation for hunting 100 Nakujuk (Gold medal: 20% discount on all shop trades)

* Compensation for hunting a Nakujuk chieftain (Gold ticket: you will acquire a magic item through a lottery)

"Anyway, it's now truly begun?"

Ark was also the person who came up with this. Although the war was won, the Nakujuk could still send troops through letter movement as they still occupied the valley village. With the Baran clan's power growing, the Nakujuk were engaged in a last desperate struggle. It wasn't enough for him to be worried, but he couldn't just leave it alone. If their numbers grew then they could threaten Haman fortress. Thus the only method Ark could think of to reduce the Nakujuk's numbers was to use the players. Seutandal's current situation meant that they couldn't afford a lot of rewards. Although the Eastern Nation had a lot of funds, a lot of it is focused on construction. So they didn't have the ability to give a decent compensation all participants. However, they couldn't delay the development of Seutandal.

'Apart from warriors, merchants also came here.'

Therefore Ark designed the medal system. When players first come to Seutandal, they couldn't use the stores run by the Baran clan. They had to at least receive a copper medal to use the stores. And the discount would increase with the silver and gold medals. Thanks to that, users who came to Seutandal had no choice but to defeat the Nakujuk. The average level of users who came to Seutandal was level 200. On the other hand, the Nakujuk was between level 250~280. Therefore there were many notices on the bulletin boards of users looking for parties.

"I'm recruiting people to hunt the Nakujuk!"

"Are there any magicians here?"

But the profession that suffered the most was the merchants. For merchants seeking to trade in Seutandal, being prohibited from using the stores was like being struck by lightning on a clear day. Moreover, they had to receive a discount in order to truly receive a profit from the stores. In other words, merchants needed at least a gold medal but the Nakujuk was a fair distance away from the fortress and not many parties wanted to take merchants.

"Buying Nakujuk's Red Hair, 20 silver for one!"

"Buying a set of 100 Nakujuk's Red Hair for 190 gold!"

The merchants crouched near the bulletin board and bought the tokens. Thanks to that, there were quite a few warriors who stayed around Haman fortress for the part time job of hunting tokens. But if looked at closely, it wasn't that different from deceiving people with petty tricks.

'Huhuhu, the Nakujuk are the Haman's war enemy so the discount would automatically be applied as the NPC's sign of appreciation for people who killed a lot of them.'

The medal system was only to give the appearance of compensation. It was a petty trick to avoid having to spend money on users! That was Ark's speciality. However, Ark's medal system was hiding an even more extravagant scheme.....!

'Once everyone possesses a medal it will become insignificant, but at the moment not that many users have them. The Nakujuk aren't easy to hunt for level 200 users and the token won't drop that often.'

So there were many users who couldn't use the stores. However, the users needed consumables to hunt the Nakujuk. Of course, the merchants who came from the continent sold consumables but there was a constant shortage of supplies for warriors.

‘This is a chance to sell the consumables obtained from Magaro’s laboratory!’

Thanks to the Seutandal stores being sealed off, Ark managed to obtain a sell his goods for a large price. Abuse of power! How wicked..... Ark was indeed good at being wicked.

‘Well, it can’t be helped even if the actions are dirty. There are 20 days left until I need to pay the balance for the house. I have to organize everything and make some money. And volunteer troops are necessary for Haman fortress anyway. I’m not going to allow such annoying things to prick my conscience.’

Ark finished firming his mental state. Anyway, the bulletin board also posted new developments and events.

-This week’s events

*Find the hidden Eastern Nation clan: Find the Eastern Nation clan members hiding using ‘Stealth’ in Haman fortress.

This is a challenge for the foreigners visiting Seutandal. The Eastern Nation members are hiding somewhere between points A-F in Haman fortress. After finding and collecting some documents from the clan members, you will receive a fixed prize. Foreigners with skills such as ‘Sensing’, ‘Tracking’ and ‘Sixth Sense’ are encouraged to participate.

-Facilities Guide

*One day farm experience: Experience harvesting various Seutandal plants or visiting the cattle. It can be a great opportunity to pick up leather extraction or butchering from the kind farm owner (Currently in business).

* Beseutyu’s information centre: It is possible to hear the history and information about Seutandal from the wise man Beseutyu, whose family has kept records for a long time. It can be a hint for finding new adventures in Seutandal (Currently in business).

* Monster Safari: Learn the tendencies and weak points of various monsters as you travel around Seutandal. An ideal chance to learn what you might face! (Currently under construction. Opening soon)

* Seutandal Sightseeing: Have you arrived in Seutandal only to find a gloomy black map? You can sightsee around Seutandal using the skyrays, making it a convenient and safe method of travelling and uncovering your map (Business is closed for a while due to various circumstances).

Not only Lancel village, but Seutandal also seemed to become more and more like an amusement park.

‘Well, it’s good that there are lots of ways to enjoy themselves.’

Ark laughed and entered Haman fortress. When Ark appeared in the shopping district, the various Baran clan members recognized him and greeted him. He was grateful but it was a little stressful as the users’ attention would focus on him. On the other hand, he was satisfied by the thought that Seutandal had completely become his home town. Anyway, Ark hadn’t returned to Seutandal to view the development. The most important thing was finding the last Three Marvels and reclaiming his summons.

‘The last piece of the Three Marvels is almost in my grasp.....’

The problem is finding where Razak and Dedric lived. Before returning to Haman fortress, Ark had tried contacting Yuzuria. The world tree should know about the distribution of each species in Seutandal. But Yuzuria shook her head.

-Of course my roots used to stretch across all of Seutandal. The world tree can obtain a lot of information through those roots. However, you didn’t allow a lot of room for my roots to stretch when you planted me in here.

Anyway, the world tree wasn’t useful in matters like these. He was more likely to find information from Beseutyu who has recorded the history of Seutandal. That’s why Ark contacted JusticeMan before departing.

‘Is it here?’

Ark looked at the wooden building situated to one side of Haman fortress. This was the information centre that Beseutyu had created after Seutandal rose.

“Welcome. This is Beseutyu’s Information Centre..... Eh? Ark hyung!”

Bona’s eyes widened when he saw who came in through the door. After Seutandal had risen, some of the Baran who had been living in Lancel village returned. Bona also returned as well to help Beseutyu. Therefore, his <Find the Settlers> quest unfortunately stopped at 98%.

“Wah, when did you arrive?”

“Just now. Where’s your Grandpa?”

"Grandpa went to another elder's house to collect the materials you required. He hadn't been able to recover the data from the valley village yet. You came faster than expected."

"You're looking after the business alone?"

"Hehe, I also know quite a lot. I'll show it to Ark hyung for free."

Bona pushed out his chest and spoke firmly.

"Ooh, really? Then please guide me further. What new information is there these days?"

Ark playfully asked an embarrassed Bona who scratched his head.

"H-hyung still knows more than me. You know everything.... Ah, that's right! Hyung, did you know about this?"

"What?"

"Something important happened not that long ago."

Bona looked around and lowered his voice.

"I heard it from Lariette noona....."

"Ah, Lariette-nim is here as well? I thought that Lariette-nim was accompanying the rehabilitation group as they surveyed the area. What's going on?"

The soldiers who fought the Nakujuk had changed their name to the 'Autonomous' soldiers. And the Autonomous group was led by JusticeMan, the rehabilitation group and Lariette. Their dream of an autonomous police force that couldn't be achieved in Lancel was finally fulfilled in Seutandal. But Bona was showing a discontented expression as he talked.

"You should let me tell you."

"Okay, okay. Continue."

"There was an incident where a group of tourist who visited the Eastern ruins in Seutandal was exterminated. The guides and tourists didn't have enough strength and died."

"What?"

"It's not just that. Several days after that incident, a magician and a warrior attacked out sightseeing office."

"They came inside Haman fortress?"

"Yes, isn't that absurd? There were 20 staff working there and six people lost their lives. Soldiers were immediately dispatched but they're still not caught. They've probably already escaped to the continent."

Bona added that it was the reason JusticeMan, the rehabilitation members and Lariette hadn't come to greet him. The commanders of the autonomous force were the only ones strong enough so they went out to chase directly. The Nakujuk and Baran didn't have any NPCs that could use magic. If a magician managed to get into the city, how many NPCs would be massacred?

"But how would they have escaped to the continent? The autonomous members are defending the harbour. Shouldn't the criminals be unable to use the ferry?"

"That's....."

"Recently there are rumours of smugglers."

At that moment Beseutyu had entered and answered. Then Bona shouted with a sulky face.

"Grandpa, Ark-hyung is my customer!"

"Hehehe, sorry. How have you been doing Ark? I'm sorry it wasn't possible for me to go and greet you. I was looking for the materials you requested. I thought about sending Bona but then the store would've been empty."

"No it's fine. I never asked for it. And I'm glad that the residents are grateful but it is a little hard. There is no need for it next time."

"Well, you are hiding your own achievements..... As expected, you have the qualities of a true warrior."

Beseutyu once again firmly misunderstood.

"By the way, what did you say about smugglers?"

Ark asked with curiosity while Beseutyu sighed as he sat down in a chair.

"Yes, that's what I said. Registered criminals aren't allowed ride the ferry would have to sneak into Seutandal. But there's even more. A while ago there was an

incident when a boat was attacked by a group of pirates entirely consisting of those criminals. So there is a place in Seutandal where criminals are gathering. The authorities have been investigating the coast but still haven't found anything. I also believe that they have contact with the Nakujuk."

The situation turned out to be surprisingly serious after listening. But when he thought about it, it was entirely possible. Although Haman fortress treated the Nakujuk as monsters, they were also residents of Seutandal. There was the precedent of the Hermes guild interacting with them. Obviously chaotic players would be eager to come to Seutandal. There were users in the game who owned merchant boats and at least one of them would be eager to bring chaotic players to Seutandal for money. Since there were high levels of maritime trade, a lot of chaotic users also take up piracy.

'The Hermes Alliance might even be protesting using these actions.'

Hermes had already made an alliance with the Nakujuk. If there were outlaws living in Nakujuk territory then Hermes were certainly among them. The Hermes guild definitely hadn't given up on Seutandal yet. The three kingdoms openly formed goodwill with the Baran clan, yet schemes could still be arranged secretly.

'This is why JusticeMan, the rehabilitation members and Lariette-nim are searching for the culprits. Seutandal still has a long way to go before it becomes stable.'

The path to true peace was distant and steep.

"Although that information is true, there's still no need to worry that much."

Beseutyu coughed and changed the subject after seeing Ark's serious expression.

"Here is what you were looking for."

"Did you find it?"

"Not exactly, but I can guess the area."

Beseutyu opened the map and pointed towards one spot.

"You said that your summons are a vampire and undead? In my opinion the vampire lives here. He is located in the northwest of Seutandal. This is a place that no one has ever been to. But an elder had an ancient document and I noticed a strange passage."

"Strange passage?"

“Yes, a long time ago ... I think it was before the Dark Century. One traveller explored the northwest territory of Seutandal and discovered a land enveloped in darkness. And a race that relied on drinking human blood lived there. They are hostile to outsiders and will capture them for their blood. The traveller would be drained of their blood until they died of old age.”

“The traveller died? Then how was it recorded?”

“They placed the message in a bottle and sent it into the sea before dying. An ancient record keeper found the document. The location on that document points to this area.”

Blood-sucking species. The vampire. Ark checked the map again and tilted his head to one side.

“Wait? Isn’t this.....?”

Ark noticed something strange and opened his own map.

‘There’s no doubt. This is the area pointed out by Yggdrasil and Yuzuria that contains the fragment of the Three Marvels! What the? Then the last beast clan is the vampire? But vampires are able to change into people. Maybe they live together with the beast clan keeping the final piece? Or did the beast clan bury the fragment somewhere in the territory of the vampire?’

Ark was confused but it wasn’t bad news.

‘This means I can find Dedric and the fragment of the Three Marvels at the same time.

“Do you know how to get there?”

Although he had been living in Seutandal for a while, he still hadn’t explored a lot of it. He had only explored the east and south around Haman fortress and the area around Ageiron in the north. That wasn’t even 1/5th of the entire area of Seutandal. Therefore most of his map was still black. Since Seutandal was surrounded by mountain ranges, it wasn’t possible to wander around blindly. That was why the Seutandal sightseeing business received a lot of profit.

“Um..... Actually, that’s the problem.”

Beseutyu took out an old map. It was a map of Seutandal, but the lines summarizing the land seemed like it was graffiti drawn by a 13 year old. Of course, the terrain was still recognizable on such a map.

"Now, look here. This is the northern mountain ranges, and this is the western mountain ranges. Thanks to these mountain ranges, Seutandal is clearly able to be divided into north, south, east and west. Thanks to the high mountain ranges the air flow, weather and ecosystem in each region is different. But the place you want to get to is surrounded by the mountain ranges."

Beseutyu shook his head.

"This area is also filled with steep cliffs and there are many storms thanks to the different air currents striking against each other. Thus it also won't be possible to use the skyways to fly over a land route. Even the Nakujuk can't use the Drakens to approach this area."

"Then there is no way to get there?"

".....It would've been impossible in the past."

"You're saying it is possible now?"

Beseutyu worried for a moment about Ark's question before replying.

"You know that Seutandal had been caught in the dimensional storm until now. Because of the storm, it wasn't even possible to approach this area from the outside. In fact, until now we thought of that place as the end of the world. But then Seutandal rose. It is now an island."

"As expected, it's the sea."

Ark instantly knew the answer. Yes, the place where Ark had to go touched the coast. If he couldn't cross over the mountains then he could enter by the sea.

"Honestly, I would like to stop you. Like I said, there is no information about this place. Only that the dreadful vampires who suck human blood live there."

"I have no choice but to go."

He had no choice, even if the destination was a dragon's lair.

"Is that so....."

"Then do you have any information about the territory of the undead?"

"Yes, that place is quite well known. Didn't I previously tell you that the undead had a significant effect on Seutandal? Because of the dimensional gap, the undead were freely able to travel in and out of the underground. In fact, the underground had

been gradually widening because of the dimensional storms. But the rate of erosion had decreased ever since Seutandal rose.”

Beseutyu explained while pointing to another spot on the map. It was located on the north end of the East Moon Mountains.

“Ah, the conversation got side-tracked for a moment. Anyway, this is the place where the undead will appear. ‘City of the Dead.’ It is the territory of the undead. This was originally underground but it returned to normal after Seutandal rose. But it is the territory of the undead so there is still danger.”

“Thank you. You’ve really helped me a lot.”

Ark began to rise from his seat when Beseutyu began speaking again.

“Wait a minute. I have something to give to you.”

“Huh? A gift?”

“In fact, I was going to give it when all the autonomous members were gathered..... But you dislike the idea of an uproar so I’ll give it to you quietly. They’re also busy investigating the sightseeing office attack case. I’ll speak as the clan’s representative.”

Beseutyu took out a small box from his pocket and spoke in a serious voice.

“The Baran clan has really learned a lot after meeting you. We would’ve had everything taken away from us if it wasn’t for you. So the elders started consulting each other after Seutandal rose. It was about how we should repay you. As expected, this was the only option.”

“That.....?”

“Didn’t I say this before? Our clan’s saviour was Rarukan. Thus we made Rarukan’s ring in order to return the favour. Just like Rarukan, you are also our saviour. Therefore we made Ark’s ring to return the favour. Although we don’t have the ancient knowledge used to create Rarukan’s ring anymore, the elders melted down all the magic ore to create this.”

The box was opened and a ring with five coloured jewels appeared.

-Ark’s Ring (Unique, impossible to be traded after being acquired)

Item type: Ring

User restriction: Level 200 and higher

A ring specially designed by the inhabitants of the Netherworld, the Baran clan for their saviour Ark-nim.

This ring was created from smelted magic ore that had been passed down to the elders from a long time ago. Unfortunately the ancient knowledge of the Baran clan has disappeared so the full power of the magic ores couldn't be properly used. However, the magic of the five jewels has the power to amplify the body's physical abilities. The inside of the ring is carved with the words 'Homage to Ark, saviour of our clan.'

<Option: Strength +5, Agility +5, Stamina +5, Wisdom +5, Intelligence +5>

<Special Option: You can use the skill 'Sudden Increase in Power.' When this skill is used, your strength, agility, stamina, wisdom and intelligence will increase by 40 for 30 minutes. But after the effects have passed, you will fall into a 'weakened' state for 5 minutes. Cool down time: 24 hours>

'Heok, a unique item!'

Ark's eyes widened. It was a ring which raised all his stats except for luck! The additional ability made it one of the best items. Although it couldn't be traded or sold in shops once acquired, having an item with his name carved on it in a game was quite nice.

'Ohh, I didn't receive any compensation from the Baran clan for defeating the Nakujuk after Seutandal rose so my heart had been quite uncomfortable.....'

Now he had been compensated by the Baran after a period of time had passed. Although he also received the compensation from the mermaids and the Meow like that.

"I see that Ark-hyung likes the ring."

Bona smiled and spoke after Ark failed to hide his joy. He remembered how Ark had previously dropped Rarukan's ring which he had been so excited to obtain. However this was not the only reward.

"The representative Isabel would also like to meet you."

'Oh, there's still something else?'

Ark eagerly looked for Isabel. Then Isabel spoke after Ark found her.

“Welcome, Ark-nim. I arrived in Seutandal as soon as Deliverer-nim contacted me, but regretfully Ark-nim had already left.”

Isabel had become the representative of Seutandal because of Ark but he had already left for Giran by the time she arrived.

“I’m sorry but the current Eastern Nation is investing all its funds into development so I can’t give you a reward. But you will always be appreciated and remembered as the clan’s saviour. In addition, we will help Ark-nim whenever you require it. This is not the promise of the representative of Seutandal, but as the head of the Eastern Nation.”

Isabel’s words caused an information window to appear.

-You have received the title ‘Seutandal’s Hero’ from the representative Isabel.

You have overcome many difficulties and completed all the main quests related to Seutandal. You have fulfilled the Baran clan’s long cherished goal of escaping from the threat of the Nakujuk and forming the new Eastern Nation. Seutandal has also returned to middle earth after hundreds of years. It is difficult to believe one person has accomplished such great achievements! It takes a true hero that criminals can’t even imagine to achieve such great feats.

You heroic deeds will be recorded in the history of Seutandal for a long time.

-Seutandal’s Hero is one of the ‘Hidden Hero’ titles

You don’t dwell on fame. You would rather find a way to be useful to others than achieve further fame. The ‘pursuit of truth’ is one of the traits of ‘hidden heroes.’ This trait will give you an opportunity to learn special skills in exchange for ‘Lore’ fame.

* As a title bonus, all stats increase by 2.

* Degree of intimacy with all members of the Eastern Nation will rise to the maximum amount.

*Fame increases by 50.

* Thanks to the effect of ‘Pursuit of Truth,’ hidden NPCs who ‘inherit and convey lore’ will teach you secret techniques in exchange for fame. The fame consumed will depend on the type of technique.

‘What the, it’s not an item?’

Ark looked at the information window with a slightly disappointed expression. He resolved the desire of the Eastern Nation which stretched over hundreds of years and only received a title..... But he already received the trade agreement contract and the Eastern Nation was struggling economically so he should be satisfied with this much.

‘By the way, what is the ‘Pursuit of Truth?’

He hadn’t received that many bonuses from the title this time. Instead, the title had granted him the special quality ‘Pursuit of Truth.’

‘If I encounter hidden NPCs then I can exchange fame for secret techniques? How is that different from skills? Fame is no use for a Dark Walker but how will I find hidden NPCs? Well, I’ll probably meet such a person someday anyway. I can learn about the special trait after meeting the NPC.’

Ark talked with Isabel a little more after that. According to Isabel, Shambala had once again resumed his quest to collect the scattered Dark Brothers all over the continent. Now that there was the Eastern Nation, gathering them would become much easier.

‘If I’m too slow then won’t Shambala change to his second profession first?’

Ark felt a little burdened after hearing Isabel’s words. He was about to finish the conversation when Ark remembered something.

“Ah, wouldn’t there be a suitable place here?”

“A suitable place?”

“For this guy to take a break.”

Ark pointed towards Radun. Radun was a summon. Unlike Dedric and Razak, Radun was always wrapped around his waist but Radun needed a place in Seutandal to revive in just in case he died. Therefore three Summoning Ports were necessary. Since Dedric and Razak had already died, Ark needed to go visit them directly but he needed to find a suitable place for the location of the Summoning Port. It would be a problem if something happened to Radun after being recalled so he needed a safe place. And wasn’t the Eastern Nation the safest place in Seutandal? Isabel smiled at Ark’s explanation and nodded.

“Then how about my room?”

“Isabel’s room?”

“Yes, only I can use it so other people won’t notice. Besides, it’s good if I can sometimes meet such a cute pet. How about it? You don’t want to?”

Ssak ssak? Ssak ssak ssak ssak!

Radun eagerly nodded as Isabel stroked his head. Normally pretty girls hated snakes. Therefore Isabel earned Ark’s approval. The safest place in Seutandal was in Isabel’s room in the Eastern Nation as it was always protected by hundreds of people. But was that all? Shambala was Isabel’s bodyguard so he would therefore become Radun’s. Well, it was better for Shambala not to know that.....

Ark entered Isabel’s room and left the Summoning Port in a suitable place. Once it was connected using magic, the jewel at the top started shining and a message window appeared.

-Please select the target to be registered.

“Radun.”

Ssak ssak ssak, ssak ssak ssak ssak!

-Ark’s summon ‘Radun’ has been registered to the Summoning Port.

If the registered pet’s summons is cancelled, it will be recalled to this location. It is similar to when the summoned pet dies and the pet can’t be summoned for 24 hours. When dying in this state, the penalty isn’t applied to the summons. But if the Summoning Port is destroyed and the pet dies, it will lose 10% of its stats.

‘Except for choosing the location of my pet’s recall, it isn’t that different from before. However, this cost 700 gold.’

Who knew that such a large amount of money would be wasted on his summons?

‘Now I have to look for my other summons directly.’

Anyway, now Ark’s summon Radun had become Isabel’s pet.

‘Shall I put the rest in order before departing?’

Ark exited to the town and went to the shopping area. The route to the shopping centre? He passed by 10 shops. But Seutandal was still suffering from a shortage of materials so half of them weren’t open. In addition, medals were needed for the store so the shopping area was mainly empty. By the way, there was one area which had a lot of people coming and going.

"Selling best quality potions and scrolls that are difficult to get from the continent. There's no need to hesitate. It's inexpensive, inexpensive! Please hurry. They're running out quickly!"

The person who opened a street stall in the corner and shouting was Buksil.

"Hey Buksil."

"Yes, welcome. Huh? Ark-nim!"

Buksil ran over with a joyful look.

"When did you come back?"

"Just now. How much have you sold?"

"Huhuhu, I thought you would ask. The business is doing amazing. All the special potions have been sold and now the recovery potions and scrolls are left. The current sales is 3,320 gold."

"That's a lot more than I thought?"

"Don't you know? It's thanks to my abilities. I went around Seutandal to check how much the volume of each produce and raised the price little by little. Supply and demand, that is the basics of a sales pitch. After selling about 70% of the products I would then raise the price."

'Ohhh, he's quite good?'

Ark looked at Buksil with new eyes. In fact, Ark had calculated that he would receive approximately 2,500 gold for the items obtained in Magaro's laboratory. Thanks to the uniqueness of Seutandal's medal system which restricted store transactions, he had made up to 3,000 gold. But thanks to Buksil's marketing strategy, he had exceeded that by 10%.

"That means I can get the sales execution fee of 332 gold right?"

Buksil clasped both hands together as his eyes sparkled. Of course, 10% was definitely 332 gold. However.....

"No, 132 gold."

"Huh? Huh? W-w-what did you say?"

"Video copyright fee."

Buksil winced at Ark's cold tone.

"Don't you know I called the broadcasting station and learned everything?"

"You received 2 million won for the rights to the video?"

Buksil started sweating as the words continued. Yes, Ark had called the broadcasting station as soon as he got home after Ho Myung-hwan had told him about it. Of course, it wasn't that easy to receive the information from the station. So Ark contacted the station through Ho Myung-hwan and learned the price. It was 2 million won. Therefore 2 million won was removed from the 332 gold. Buksil quivered on his feet and spoke carefully.

"B-but I'm the one who shot the video..... Deducting the 2 million won is....."

"What?"

A cry of distress escaped from Buksil as Ark approached him.

"I'm not shameless enough to seize the 2 million won. No, to be honest I have no interest in the copyright. If you consulted me then I wouldn't have asked for it."

That was impossible. If he consulted Ark then Ark would've negotiated with the broadcasting station to receive even more. Then he would use that as an excuse to take some of the money. But there was no reason to reveal the truth to Buksil now that Ark had caught him.

"How could you? You didn't even speak a single word to me. Did you think I wouldn't learn about it later? I really believed you. I thought you were a friend. But you betrayed your friend for 2 million won. Do you understand my feelings?"

Ark's impassioned speech caused Buksil to become embarrassed.

"I'm really sorry. Please forgive me." Ark-nim thought of me like that....."

"Shut up, I can't just forgive you! Do you know how big the wound in my heart is? This is why I distrust humans! 2 million won? Honestly, I feel like you should just take the 332 gold and never see me again."

"Hik, n-no. It's because I did a lot of home shopping and I needed money. Please forgive me! Huk huk huk, I absolutely won't do it again. I won't do it without Ark's permission in the future. Please believe me!"

"The future?"

Ark abruptly changed and murmured quietly.

"Then will you film my videos from now on?"

"Huk huk huk, I'll do anything. Whatever you want. Video..... Eh? Huh? Video?"

Buksil finally realised something strange. But Ark pretended ignorance and continued talking.

"Okay, then I'll forgive you this time."

"W-wait a minute. Filming videos?"

"Due to various circumstances, I need to film videos from now on. You're willing to do that work from now on? Thank you very much. I'll hire you. I look forward to you being my exclusive cameraman."

"I said wait a minute. What the hell are you talking about?"

"Ah ah, don't worry. I'm not that inconsiderate so I'll give you a monthly salary of 50 gold. How about it? Isn't it good?"

In fact, this was Ark's purpose. The method of the entrance examination had changed so he needed to take videos continuously from now on. However, it was too difficult for Ark to hold the camera and fight at the same time. That's why he approached Buksil. Buksil understood that Ark wanted to keep his identity secret and took care of it. He also functioned as a bag space so it was killing two birds with one stone! He was actually worried the most about bag space. He had become used to Buksil accompanying him so the smaller bags felt awful.

'He received 2 million won for the video rights. If I can get free videos and a merchant's bag space, 500000 won a month is no big deal.'

The problem was Buksil. A merchant was an occupation which can earn quite a lot of money. He had been accompanying Ark until now because of his goal, but now that reason was gone. As expected, Buksil's rocking body made his refusal clear.

"B-but I have my own plans....."

"Really? Then it's not possible."

"You're giving up?"

"Well, I can't force someone if they dislike it."

Buksil sighed with relief at Ark's answer. At that moment, Ark murmured like he was thinking out loud.

"However, there was that thing I heard about. The game character's publicity rights....."

"Huh? Publicity rights?"

"I'll give an example. What would happen if someone sold the rights to a video without asking the protagonist and he complained? Could it be broadcast anymore? The broadcasting station might even make the person who sold the video pay a penalty fee."

"Huk, w-what it that.....?"

"Apparently the penalty sum is 10 times what the broadcasting station paid for the rights..... 10 times 2 million won, isn't that 20 million won? Wah! It's no joke. Do you have that type of money? Oh, where did you say you used the money again? Huh? Why are you shaking? It was just an example. Eh? Are you crying? Why are you crying? I was just mentioning it. Do you really think I would go that far? Speaking of the videos....."

"I'll do it, I'll do it! No, please let me do it!"

"Eh? Really? Ya, as expected from Buksil. Okay, I won't be able to stop you since you're so willing. Let's give you an unscheduled deposit. We'll do a contract of 50 gold for 6 months. Now, all 50 gold to 132 gold and it is 182 gold in total!"

Ark kindly extended the 182 gold. Ark deducted 200 gold from 332 gold because of the broadcasting fee and added 50 gold, making it 182 gold..... That was Ark's calculation method.

'I can't escape. It's not six months. I can't escape this man for my entire life.'

That's what Buksil was feeling after taking the 182 gold from Ark.

"Now, shall we leave on another adventure?"

Ark headed towards the coast with Buksil reluctantly trailing behind him. He needed to go to the 'Land of the Vampires' and the 'City of the Dead.' He selected the first destination as the land of the vampires where the final fragment of the Three Marvels could be found. The problem was that he could only enter through the sea route. However, there weren't any commercial boats or ferries to that location.

‘Do I have to pay for a chartered merchant boat?’

But it wasn’t that easy to charter a merchant boat. Even a small vessel that only 2 people could ride required 200-300 gold. There wasn’t that much time left to obtain the rent money so he couldn’t spend that much on chartering.

‘Unbelievable. However, it’s not possible to bite the Mermaid’s Scale and walk under the ocean..... Huh?’

It had been such a long time since he obtained it that Ark had forgotten about the item.

‘Oh my god, why didn’t I think about it until now?’

“Radun, Flute of the Merpeople!”

Ssak ssak ssak, ssak ssak ssak ssak!

Radun spat out a small flute.

If he was by the ocean, it was possible to call the dolphins using ‘Flute of the Merpeople.’ After he received it, he never went to the ocean so he had forgotten about it. If he remembered then he wouldn’t have needed to pay the money for the ferry going between the continent and Seutandal.

‘Fortunately I made a profit from the fish on the boat..... Anyway, I have to put the special items separately so I don’t forget about it again.’

Ark moved to a deserted beach and blew the flute. The quiet sea rippled and a herd of dolphins appeared. Ark got on the back of the dolphins and shouted in a powerful voice.

“Now, let’s go! The goal is the land of the vampires!”

Act 6: Vampire Castle

“Ugh, my waist is so sore.”

Ark moaned as he got off the dolphin. Using the dolphins was good because they don’t cost any money. But it was different from riding a comfortable sailing boat, with the spine being constantly bent over. In addition, he had to ride them for quite

a distance. Yuzuria said that the fragment of the Three Marvels was 700 km away from her in a straight line. However, Ark had to travel around the coast so it was more like 1,000 km. Of course, the distance was different from reality but it still took him 5 hours to get to his destination.

“Phew, I’m glad we arrived before my waist broke.”

Ark looked around with tense eyes. He had left in the evening and it took 5 hours so it was now midday. But the land around him was enveloped in a thick darkness. An information window had appeared when he arrived near the coast.

-You have entered the ‘Dark Earth’ area.

<Explorer’s Knowledge: Hidden area discovery bonus (Skill Points: 20)>

-You have been affected by a mysterious magic ‘Dark Blood’ created by an unknown source!

<All players within ‘Dark Blood’s’ sphere of influence will have stats and range of vision reduced by 30%. However, this penalty doesn’t apply to players with a dark attribute. On the other hand, players with a ‘light’ attribute will have their skills blocked by Dark Blood and continuously receive damage from the darkness>

The area was veiled in a lifelike black fog. Not even the moonlight could shine through the thick darkness. It was truly the land of the vampires.

‘By the way, it was under his nose the whole time.....’

Who would’ve thought that the final piece of the Three Marvels was hidden in the area that Dedric lived in?

‘It’s worked out well. If I find Dedric then it shouldn’t be that difficult to find the final piece. First I have to find Dedric and receive information about the terrain.’

But he couldn’t be reassured about finding Dedric. If this was the land of the vampires then there would be other vampire apart from Dedric. There was no guarantee that those other vampires would be friendly to Ark. In normal fantasy worlds, vampires possessed powerful magic and great intelligence. Fortunately, he had the dark attribute so ‘Dark Blood’ hadn’t affected him but he couldn’t be careless.

“Oh Ark-nim, isn’t this atmosphere unusual? My stats have decreased. What on earth is this area?”

Buksil asked Ark in an uneasy voice after landing.

“Oh, didn’t I tell you? This is the land of the vampires.”

“Huh? V-vampires? I-I’ve suddenly remembered that I’m really busy so I have to go.....”

“Do you want to die?”

“Huk huk, it’s really scary. I’ve always been scared of the vampire Dracula.”

Well, Buksil’s fear was understandable but he wouldn’t be the one at risk. No matter how scary they were, a vampire was still a monster.

He would just hunt it like normal if it appeared.

“Stop talking nonsense and follow me.”

Ark used Eyes of the Cat and entered the forest next to the shore. The map cleared up and confirmed that the forest located in the east was enormous. And the bushes in the forest were really dense.

‘Apart from the black mist, what else is special about the land of the vampires?’

But Ark started feeling really uncomfortable after entering the forest.

‘What the? This feeling?’

Ark once again checked the area with tense expression. However, he couldn’t see anything different apart from trees and grass. It was quiet. No, it was too quiet. Yes, that was the source of his uncomfortable feeling. The forest was dense but he couldn’t feel any signs of life from it. No matter where he went he couldn’t see any signs of monsters, small animals or even birds. It was so silent that even the sound of Buksil swallowing his saliva could be clearly audible.

‘Weird, something is weird.’

“Hieeek, hieeek! Ark-nim, Ark-nim, over there, something is over there.....!”

“What? Where?”

Ark tensed and turned around after pulling his sword out. However, there was nothing at the place Buksil indicated.

“There is nothing!”

“B-b-but something clearly touched the back of my neck.....”

“Calm down! You surprised me for no reason.”

Ark once again started looking around the forest. Thanks to Buksil’s commotion, Ark also started to feel more anxious. It really felt like something was following them through the forest. It was the same feeling that occurred when walking home alone at night.....

Occasionally Buksil would shriek and collapse onto the ground. He later learned that Buksil was weak to ghosts and demons. Buksil seemed to consider vampires as another form of demon.

‘Although Buksil is overreacting, there might be something here.’

Therefore Ark used Radun’s Stalking to check if there were any traces. However he couldn’t find anything.

‘I don’t know so I should just use Stalking continuously.’

Anyway, if he removed the uneasy feeling then travelling through the forest was okay. There weren’t any monsters or animals around but the thick forest had abundant fruits and herbs. Ark had disposed of all the japtem in his bag so he started gathering any ingredients he ran across in the forest. How much time had passed?

Ssak ssak ssak? Ssak ssak ssak ssak!

Radun who had been using Stalking flicked his tongue and pointed towards one spot. Some footprints were going between the bushes.

-You have searched for information about the target tracks.

<Classification: Warrior profession, Alignment: Normal NPC, Travelling time: 38 minutes ago>

“A normal NPC? What the? There are also normal residents here?”

Ark looked somewhat bewildered. This was the land of the vampires. Yet there were normal NPCs within this area? Didn’t that mean that the NPCs lived harmoniously with the vampires?

‘If there are NPCs then it’s not that bad. If there are NPCs then there must be a village. I can find information about the vampires from there.’

“Radun, track the footprints.”

Ssak ssak ssak, ssak ssak ssak ssak!

Ark ordered Radun and followed the footprints through the forest. They ran through the thick forest for approximately 30 minutes. The small village appeared in front of him.

“What the? This is the village?”

There were 100 residents living in the village. Ark and Buksil sighed with relief and looked around the village. But the atmosphere here was also somewhat strange. Both the men and women were burly and oversized. Their faces were also as hard as rocks that it was almost frightening.

‘Aren’t they all wearing leather clothes? There are no beasts around so why are they wearing leather clothes? And what’s with their expressions? They look like soulless people.’

Anyway, meeting the NPCs was difficult. For example, Ark had entered the village and spoken to a villager near the entrance.

“Excuse me.” “Huk, you.....!”

The villager looked like he had seen a ghost and ran into the village. It was also the same afterwards. No matter how hard he tried to ask for information, the people would run away with a fearful expression.

“Why are they all like that? Do they think I will eat them like a wild boar?”

“Ah Ark-nim! This village is strange for some reason.”

Buksil spoke with a trembling voice.

“It really is strange. The women are all like the Hulk..... Ah, I just remembered.”

“What?”

“These people have clearly been bitten by vampires. It’s just like in a movie. A person bitten by a vampire will turn into a strange monster. That’s right, clearly that’s the reason. There’s no other reason for people to live close to vampires. Oh, I see that they’ve all hidden their necks. Maybe hiding a bite mark? They also have anaemia..... Perhaps they bite according to the right blood type? I have Rh blood type..... Surely there won’t be any vampires with Rh blood type?”

.....Ah, he really was playing around. Ark didn't know why he was so afraid. But when taking into account that it was the land of the vampires, such talk couldn't be discounted.

'After thinking about it, I'm also feeling a little bit jittery?'

"You're the ones who came from the out of town."

Then he suddenly heard someone's voice from behind him. Ark and Buksil turned around with an aggressive stance but the voice just laughed.

"Hahaha, I seem to have surprised you. I'm sorry."

"Who are you.....?"

"I'm Albert. I live in this town."

The person who introduced himself as Albert was a 20 year old man. His face also looked tough so it was a serious problem in the genes of the residents. Albert smiled and still looked scary.

"Please don't be offended by the attitude of the villagers. They're just scared since this is the first time they've seen outsiders. You look different from us."

"Then you are?"

"Well, it depends on the people you talk to."

Albert shrugged and replied. Ark still wasn't satisfied but it was fortunately that he found someone willing to talk.

"By the way, I heard that vampires live here....."

"That's correct. Is it a problem?"

Ark became even more lost at Albert's words.

'Eh? What the, what's with this reaction? Isn't it a vampire? Don't vampires suck a person's blood? But how can he look so casual talking about vampires? What on earth is going on? Perhaps?'

"Then are you possibly a vampire?"

"Heok!"

Buksil freaked out and retreated at Ark's words. But Albert just laughed and shook his head.

"That's impossible. Vampires are the aristocrats. It's impossible for them to live in a village like this. If you've asked such a question then I guess there are no vampires outside."

"Then you live alongside the vampires?"

"Of course."

Albert nodded and replied.

"Well, this is your first time here so I'll explain it to you. The fact that vampires are our saviours. All the residents of this place are protected by the lord."

"Lord?"

"The Vampire Lord."

Albert turned his eyes towards the forest and continued talking.

"You probably don't know this, but a big incident occurred in this region a long time ago. The sky and earth were abruptly divided and fire covered the world."

It was probably when Seutandal was separated from middle earth and engulfed in the dimension storm.

"At that time, many people died without knowing why. Then a Vampire Lord led his clan here. And he used powerful magic to set wards around this area. We're alive thanks to those wards. In addition, the Lord drove out all the monsters that inhabited this area. Thanks to that, the forest became abundant and we don't have to worry about our lives. Well, we've lived without fear for a long time so they've become a bit cowardly."

Albert smiled and pointed to the village. When Ark turned to look, the villagers who had been peeking through their windows instantly hid. Anyway, Albert's explanation was startling. According to him, the vampire that appeared here wasn't the one that he knew about. It wasn't a vampire who indiscriminately sucked blood but one who lived in harmony with common NPCs. And thanks to the powerful enchantments placed by the Vampire Lord, the residents were unaware that Seutandal had risen.

“Oh! That happened outside? But it has nothing to do with us. This is a paradise with no threat from monsters and abundant resources. We are satisfied with our lives here.”

The surrounding forest was definitely rich in fruits. And according to Albert, there are many wild beasts deep in the forest.

‘Ha..... There really are many surprising things about the area. I never thought there would be people living near a vampire.’

Anyway, it wasn’t bad news for Ark. If a gentle vampire was living here then wouldn’t he have no problems finding Dedric and the Three Marvels?

“By the way, why have foreigners like you come here? You’ve clearly misunderstood the vampires so what reason did you have for coming here?”

It was like Albert had scratched an itchy place.

“I actually came to find something.”

“I might be able to help.”

“I’m looking for..... No, I’m actually looking for two people. One is a vampire called Dedric. He is an aristocrat.”

“Ah, Dedric. I know him. He is a vampire living nearby.”

“Really?”

“Yes, I can guide you to his residence.”

“Please guide me.”

“I’ll do that. And the other person?”

“They are a beast clan. Have you ever seen any beast clans in the area?”

Albert started frowning at Ark’s question. After a moment of thinking he shook his head.

“I’m sorry. I have no memory of seeing any beast clans. Excuse me, but can I ask why you’re searching for a beast clan?”

“That’s a little..... I’m sorry.”

The Three Marvels was also a treasure to NPCs. How could he excessively give out information about it? Ark refused and Albert just waved his hand casually.

“No, it’s okay. I just have a curious nature..... Anyway, I’ll guide you to Dedric. Oh, before that.....Perhaps you’ve heard rumours and came to kill a vampire.....”

“Absolutely not. Dedric will be very joyful after meeting me again.”

“Hahaha, it was just a joke. If you came to kill vampires then you would’ve never gotten through the wards. Now, follow me. When your business ends, please come talk to me about the outside world.”

Albert laughed with a pleasant voice and started walking. Indeed, a vampire had the dark attribute so a priest with the ‘light’ attribute was needed to fight it directly. However, the Dark Blood ward sealed off all light skills and would constantly damage them. In other words, the vampire’s natural enemy couldn’t enter here.

‘How powerful is the Vampire Lord to erect such wards?’

But Albert who lived here had never seen the Vampire Lord. Vampires who lived here had their own hierarchy. The Vampire Lord lived in a castle in the centre of the area and never leaves the castle, with only high ranking vampires allowed to visit. Of course, Dedric lived around the outskirts of the area.

“Ark-nim, isn’t there something strange?”

Buksil whispered in his ear while they crossed the forest. Ark sent him an irritated glance.

“What?”

“You know. A vampire and humans living peacefully..... Obviously that person is being controlled by a vampire.”

“I told you to calm down. Look at that guy’s throat. Do you see a bite mark?”

Ark pointed towards Albert’s neck as he spoke. Of course Ark had considered it. But there were no marks on his neck after checking. Ark also wasn’t afraid of vampires like Buksil was. Wasn’t Ark’s summon also a vampire? After thinking about Dedric, he highly doubted that the vampires in New World were that scary. The vampires sucked blood of course but who knew if they even had a skill to control people? And even if such a skill existed, he doubted that the vampire could use it excessively.

'I'll just kill it if it turns out badly.'

"This is Dedric's castle."

After walking for 30 minutes, Albert indicated a towering castle in the woods and spoke.

"T-that is Dedric's castle?"

Ark and Buksil's mouths dropped. The castle was located on an enormous cliff. It looked like an old castle that would appear on the tourist brochures of France and the UK. It was dark and looked gloomy but that was natural for a vampire's castle. Anyway, Ark instantly became angry as he saw the castle.

'What, what the. That brat Dedric..... He was that rich?'

But after thinking about it, it was natural. After all, Dedric was an aristocrat. Moreover, he inherited all of Dunphil's property after evolving. Despite his behaviour, Dedric was still an aristocrat.

'Son of a bitch. So it's like that. My pet possessed such an extravagant castle?'

"What's wrong?"

Albert asked after seeing Ark's expression.

"Ah, it's nothing."

"Then please follow carefully. The place we're climbing is steep."

There were stone spiral steps carved into the cliff that the castle was located on. After climbing up the stone steps, soldiers guarding the gate could be seen. It was natural to have guards with a castle this size. But that just offended Ark even more.

'What is this? He even has guards? Ya, Dedric really has grown.'

"Please wait a minute."

Albert talked to the guards for a while before returning.

"The guards checked with the Lord after I said your names. They told me you can go in. The guards will guide you. So I'll be leaving....."

"Follow me."

The guards approached Ark's group after Albert left. Ark and Buksil felt their eyes widen as they entered the castle. It was extraordinary from the outside but it looked even more amazing inside. It really looked like a medieval nobleman's castle, with the walls decorated with various works of art and dozens of soldiers and servants wandering around. Some of the servants were even dressed like typical maids. Of course, the women's faces looked like the ones in the village so it was a bit disturbing..... Anyway, a dark feeling began to rise up inside of him.

'Damn, his Master is going through all this suffering while he gets to live in luxury every time he dies? Indeed, no wonder why he wanted to go home so much. He'll see soon. After registering him to the port, I'll make him constantly work!'

Ark walked up the stairs. The staircase went up to the 10th floor. Ark soon arrived in front of a door with images of bats clumsily carved into it.

"Come on in." The thick doors opened and the room Dedric lived in finally appeared. Although he knew that his summon lived here, the luxurious room made Ark hesitate for a bit. On the opposite side, a shadow sitting in a large chair with his back to Ark could be seen.

"Lord, we have brought them here."

'Lord? Then Dedric is sitting down there? That guy? He heard my name and didn't even bother to turn around? His Master has arrived yet his attitude is still like that? Isn't this like a stray dog entering the house and taking advantage? He must've become bold after being away from me for a few days. Okay, I'll see how smug he'll feel after I punish him!'

"Hey, you! You....."

Ark shouted before wincing and shutting his mouth. The chair had slowly turned around and revealed the Lord of the castle. It was a youth with neat hair. He stared at Ark and curled his lips. Sharp fangs were slowly revealed..... Anyway, he knew it was a vampire so Ark wasn't that startled. The problem was that it wasn't Dedric.

"I gladly welcome you to my castle Foreigner."

"Eh? Who.....?"

"I am the Earl of the vampire clan, Karakul. You can call me Earl."

Karakul's fangs were proudly revealed as he laughed.

"Earl Karakul? T-then Dedric?"

"Dedric? I remember hearing that name somewhere but I can't recall where."

"Eh? But I thought this was Dedric's residence.....?"

Karakul suddenly burst out laughing.

"Hahaha, the intelligence of humans who are lower animals still hasn't changed over hundreds of years. They're still stupid. You're so easily tricked after becoming a little anxious."

"What?"

"You still don't understand? You weren't led to my castle by mistake. Huhuhu, it was lucky. I'm really lucky that I was surveying the area and spotted you. I've been watching since you stepped foot into my territory. With my eyes."

It was at that time. Something floated up from behind Buksil. To his surprise, it was an eyeball! When the eyeball appeared from his neck, Buksil screamed and flopped down onto the ground. Meanwhile, the eyeball flew towards Karakul. Karakul grasped the eyeball and shoved it into his left eye before laughing.

"What a noisy pig. Well, he'll be quiet soon."

'What, what the? Eyeball? Then the uncomfortable feeling in the forest.....?'

Ark was finally able to determine the source of his uncomfortable feeling in the forest. The eyeball flew in the air so it was impossible for Radun to detect it with Stalking. Then it was hidden at the back of Buksil's neck by his hair. So of course he never knew about it.

'Then the vampire has been watching me since I arrived on the coast and lured me here? Why?'

Karakul instantly laughed when Ark retreated a few steps.

"Heh, this slow human has finally grasped the situation."

"What on earth are you after? Why would you.....?"

"Ah, you really are very stupid. The first human I met after hundreds of years is such a fool. I hope I don't become stupid after sucking his blood."

"Suck my blood?" You're so slow! Can't you tell by the atmosphere? Is this a joke? Why else would I lure someone annoying like you here?"

Karakul sent Ark an irritated glance. But Ark still couldn't understand the situation. Of course he knew. It was natural that a vampire sucked blood. However, what about the people he met in the village? And Albert? The castle's guards and employees?

"Vampires living with humans....."

"You idiot, isn't it impossible for humans to live with vampires?"

Karakul suddenly waved his cloak and a black storm appeared. Then, someone grabbed Ark's wrist from behind. He flinched and looked back at the guards. No, it was something that looked like a guard. The guard's body abruptly started splitting.

"Oooh!"

The mouth was torn from left and right and a snout appeared. Sharp fangs emerged from the mouth and there was the smell of a beast. At the same time, the skin tore apart and changed into an eerie red monster.

'Huk, this, this is?'

Ark reflexively attacked the guard with his sword. Then the guard who turned into a monster did a flip backwards and avoided his attack. In the dark, its eyes burned red! Ark quickly used Eyes of the Cat and confirmed that they were called Bloody. Soon the other guards also tore off their skin like leather and transformed.

'Oh my god, are the guards and employees of the castle also Bloody?'

Finally he realised how he had walked into the vampire's fangs. Karakul said there were no humans here. In other words, Ark was a delicious meal that had appeared after hundreds of years. Karakul had been afraid that Ark might flee which watching him and sent Albert to lure him in. He was even stupid enough to listen to the vampire's speech.

'I never thought that I would be outsmarted by a monster.'

Yes, that's why he believed Albert's words. Vampires were also monsters. He never thought that monsters in the game would use cheap tricks. However, there was something Ark hadn't considered. Dedric was somebody who sometimes helped him with his cheap tricks.

'It would be okay if there was only the Bloody.....'

Ark looked at the Bloody who were approaching in the darkness. The appearance of monsters the colour of blood in the dark was just like a horror movie. But if the visual effects were removed, it wasn't a situation that would make Ark afraid. The average level of the Bloody was 350. On the other hand, Ark's level was 314. Dark Blood applied a penalty to other players but it was a bonus to Ark. With the 40% bonus applied, Ark was level 439! Even with a lot of Bloody around, it was somewhat possible to run away from them. However, Ark felt despair after checking Karakul's level.

'Oh my god, level 500.....!'

"Huhuhu, shall I appreciate the power of a foreigner who I finally met after a long time?"

Karakul smirked and laughed.

"Arghhh, I knew it, I knew it! I told you it would be like this!"

"Shut up, would you like to become the first blood donation? Dark blade!"

Ark grabbed Buksil's collar and randomly fired off a Dark Blade.

'If Karakul helps then I'm screwed. Fortunately that guy seems to consider the battle as entertainment. I have to push those guys back and somehow escape!'

Then the Bloody avoided his Dark Blade and swiped a claw at Ark. Ark felt a dull shock in his side and quickly retreated. Then the remaining two monsters ran up to him. Ark had been thinking about waiting for a chance to escape but there were no such opportunities once the fight started.

'What, what the? These guys..... Are they really level 300?'

The Bloody were more powerful than he imagined. The attacks from the claws and fangs steadily decreased his health while they were really agile. There were only three of them but Ark couldn't 100% guarantee that he could win! His stats had increased thanks to Dark Blood. But the ward was created by vampires so it would also apply to vampires and the Bloody.

'I calculate incorrectly. After all the bonuses are applied, it's like my level is still 314!'

"Dark Protection, Sudden Increase in Power!"

Ark activated the special skills of his rings. His defense and magic resistance increased by 20%! With his stats increased to the maximum, Ark blindly rampaged using Dark Blade and Dark Dance.

“Fresh, very fresh!”

Karakul laughed and clapped at the sight. After firing all those skills, he was barely able to defeat one Bloody. While focusing on one, the other two had managed to get behind him. He received quite a lot of damage from the backstab attacks but it was within Ark’s calculations. The entrance was now wide open thanks to them being behind him.

“Now! Buksil, run!”

Ark grabbed Buksil’s collar who screamed and started running. However, at the moment something appeared in front of the door. Surprisingly, Karakul had managed to get all the way there.

“Huhuhu, after hundreds of years the humans had developed a bit of slyness.”

Karakul laughed and muttered.

“I’m glad you’re not the brainless guy I thought you were. Your skills are also not bad. The blood of a strong fellow will taste even nicer. I’ll finally be able to soothe my hunger for human blood after a long time. Ah ah ah, I can’t stand the thirst anymore. Unfortunately, this is the end of your tricks.”

Karakul instantly disappeared. Ark winced and turned his body before he suddenly felt a tremendous shock.

-You have been attacked by Karakul.

500 damage!

‘Hik, what is this.....?’

He had become dizzy from the blow. Even with his various defense buffs, he still received 500 damage! That meant the hit would’ve normally dealt 800 damage. As expected, a level 500 monster wasn’t ordinary.

‘Maybe it’s because Karakul’s stats also rose thanks to Dark Blood. Of course a ward created by a vampire would profit vampires the most.’

In a 1-on-1 fight, there was no way Ark could face him. With the Bloody there as well, the odds weren't in his favour.

'Damn, I can't become a vampire's meal!'

"Dark Blade! Dark Strike! Riposte!"

Ark fired the skills towards Karakul who just laughed.

"Nice move. But your destiny was decided the moment you stepped foot in my territory."

The two Bloody ran up and flanked Ark on the right and left and Karakul's command. Ark rapidly turned and used Riposte on them. Then he took one step back and felt a stinging sensation on his neck.

Ark panicked and saw Karakul rubbing at his mouth.

"It's been hundreds of years since I've tasted human blood..... It's as good as expected."

At the same time, a red warning message appeared in front of Ark.

-Karakul has used Blood-sucking.

The effects of Blood-sucking will vary depending on the vampire. Karakul's Blood-sucking has a 'Restraint' property. When 'Restraint' is encountered, your attack and defense will decrease by 10%. In addition, three random skills will be sealed for 10 minutes.

'Hik, w-what is this?'

Ark's face turned pale at the information window. In such a tough situation, his attack and defense was reduced and his skills Dark Dance and Dark Blade were sealed as well? Wasn't this the sound of Ark dying?

"Hahaha, I'm going to squeeze every last drop of blood from you!"

While Ark was wobbling, Karakul bared his fangs and ran up again.

'It's the end if he bites me again!'

"Radun, sword. Blade Storm!"

Ssak ssak, ssak ssak ssak ssak!

Ark received a sword from Radun and made it explode.

"Ugh, this bastard..... Where did he go.....? Catch him!"

At that moment, Ark had used 'Sprint' to run through the door and down the stairs. Then he heard a voice screaming from behind him. It was Buksil who he had forgotten about.

"Hiiiiik, A-A-A-Ark-nim!"

When he flinched and looked back, he saw Karakul inserted his fangs into Buksil's neck.

"Ah ah ah ah! Ah ah ah ah! Grandmother who passed away....."

Buksil's plump body instantly became drained like a mummy and he collapsed.

"Huhuhu, that's one fellow handled..... Bloody, catch the remaining fellow!"

"Ooh oh oh oh!"

The Bloody started tearing off their skin at Karakul's command. While all the guards and employees were turning into the Bloody, Ark ran down the stairs. There were 50 of them! Ark had truly been invited into the devil's castle.

'Oh my God!'

Ark moaned desperately. Then a large window in the middle of the stairs suddenly caught his eye.

'Okay, I have to rely on a plan of desperation now!'

Ark used 'Sprint' to run towards the window. The Bloody closest to him swung its claw. At that moment, Ark used advanced Intimidation to make it freeze and stepped on its body before jumping. It was like a scene in a Hong Kong movie as he threw his body through the window. As soon as he tried to jump through the window.....!

Tong-!

Ark was hit by an opposing power and was thrown back.

"I won't let you commit suicide!"

Karakul had used his cloak to block off Ark's escape path then ran towards him. Ark raised his body and swung his sword. However, a Bloody threw its body and was stabbed by the sword instead. Meanwhile, Karakul had approached Ark and bit his neck. His health was already low so he fell into a critical condition! His health rapidly lowered as more blood was sucked out. At the mPoment, he felt his eyesight becoming dark. Just like Buksil, Ark turned into a mummy and collapsed.

'Damn..... Dying in a place like this..... Do I have to ride the dolphins here again?'

But the situation was far more serious than Ark thought.

- 'Chain of Blood' has been activated by the vampire's Blood-sucking.

The user's soul has been captured by Karakul's Blood-sucking. Users whose soul has been captured by the vampire will have their resurrection place forcibly changed. In addition, all your abilities are sealed. The 'Chain of Blood' will last until Karakul dies or you escape from his sphere of influence.

* Your resurrection point has been forcibly changed by 'Chain of Blood.'

* All equipment has been switched off by 'Chain of Blood.'

* All stats reduced by 80% by 'Chain of Blood.'

* All special qualities and skills have been switched off by 'Chain of Blood.'

* The use of a bag has been forbidden by 'Chain of Blood.'

'W-what is this?'

This time the blood drained from Ark's face in reality as he lost consciousness in the game.

Act 7: Forced Slave Pens

How much time had passed? Ark suddenly raised his head and scanned the area.

"What, what the? Where is this? What happened?"

It was a dark space filled with a strange smell. Why was he in a place like this? Ark looked around with a puzzled expression before he touched something. His gaze lowered until he saw the collapsed form of Buksil.

“Hey, Buksil! Are you okay? Wake up!”

“Umm.....” A-Ark-nim?”

Buksil opened his eyes after Ark shook him. Then he stared at Ark foolishly before suddenly flinching.

“Heok, v-vampire! A vampire was drinking my blood..... Huh? Where is this place?”

“I just woke up and I don’t know either.”

Grrrrr.

Then he heard a horrifying sound behind him. He jumped with surprise and turned around to see deep red pupils in the darkness. It wasn’t just one. In the front, from the side, dozens of pairs of eyes with a menacing light approached them.

“Hik, hik, I didn’t see anything. Nothing was seen. I will faint. Please let me faint.”

Buksil shouted as the unidentified monsters surrounded them and grabbed Buksil’s hair. But the situation wouldn’t improve even if he fainted.

‘Damn, I don’t know what is going on but for the moment..... Huh?’

Ark quickly pulled out his sword. No, it was more like he tried to take it out. But his sword wasn’t around his waist. It wasn’t only his sword. All his armour and accessories were gone, with only rags left.

‘What on earth is going on? Why is my equipment gone?’

A red message window appeared when he tried to open his bag.

-The use of a bag has been prohibited by ‘Chain of Blood.’

‘Chain of Blood? Ah, that message I saw a while ago!’

Ark recalled what happened before he lost consciousness. That’s right. Karakul had sucked his blood and Ark fell victim to the curse ‘Chain of Blood’ after dying. After checking his status information window, Ark confirmed that he couldn’t escape from the castle with Chain of Blood still active. In addition, his stats had been

restricted by 80% and his skills, bags and equipment were all prohibited. A moan naturally emerged from Ark's mouth as he remembered.

"Oh my god! This absurd skill....."

Then there was that sound again and the red eyes came closer. With his equipment, skills and stats reduced, Ark tensed up and retreated. If he was attacked by a monster in this state then he would be torn apart.

"What on earth are these guys?" "Kikira, Kura! Stop..... Everyone is in the same situation....."

It happened when Ark and Buksil were surrounded by the red eyes. He suddenly heard a voice from behind him. The intimidating red eyes winced and withdrew. Then something hopped between his eyes.

"I understand..... It's the first time that humans came here..... There was no intention to hurt you..... No reason to harm you..... Nor any motivation..... They just gathered because it was unusual....."

Ark's eyes gradually started to adjust to the darkness. His vision gradually brightened so Ark surveyed the area. Ark had awakened in an underground stone room. And dozens of monsters swarmed in this place. Monsters that looked like earthworms, monsters that looked like bulls etc. It was like a museum of monsters with all different types gathered. The only common thing in common was that all their complexions were pale. It was a monster the size of a flea called a Flip that had spoken. If he went by appearance, it looked like the weakest but all the monsters seemed to listen to it. Fortunately, the atmosphere didn't seem hostile. No, he couldn't see the flea's impression but it seemed to be friendly.

"Where is this place? And you are?"

"This..... It is Earl Karakul's dungeon....."

The Flip spoke slowly.

"And..... We are the monsters seized by Karakul..... Just like you guys..... Well, it's quite puzzling in many ways..... You'll get used to it....."

"You were seized? Is that why monsters aren't seen in Karakul's territory?"

"That's right. But Earl Karakul is different..... The vampire has been capturing monsters for a long time in order to increase his magic..... He uses it to make his

subordinates..... You might have seen them..... Monsters the colour of blood..... The vampire changed them using his magic and called them Bloody.....”

According to flip, the Bloody were originally monsters who had been changed by the vampire’s magic. So Albert thought that the Vampire Lord killed all the monsters but he was actually using them. The Flip had a strange expression on its face as it continued.

“The monsters confined here..... Is because they failed to become Bloody..... Because not all monsters can change into Bloody..... Well, I don’t know whether it is fortunate or unfortunate.”

“Why wouldn’t it be fortunate?”

“If only it was that good..... We have two types of work here.....”

“Two types?”

Ark asked with a dubious expression. Then there was a metallic clinking sound and a couple of Bloody entered.

“Hey, it is time to work!”

When the Bloody swung its whip and shouted, the monsters flinched and exited. The Flip murmured in a low voice as they exited.

“Just go outside for the time being..... I’ll tell you beforehand..... Now that you’ve come here..... It is better not to think about resisting..... You can’t escape this place even if you die.....”

“You’re moving too slowly, quickly!”

“Hik, I’m going! I’m going! Please don’t hit me!”

Tears flowed down Buksil’s face as he was hit by the whip. When they went outside, a large underground area appeared.

“Start quickly, all those that don’t fill their quota will be punished!”

The Bloody shouted as it indicated a pile of shovels and pickaxes.

‘What do I have to do with these?’

“This brat, are you going to just stand there?”

When Ark hesitated, the Bloody instantly swung its whip at him. Ark had a sudden realization. He thought that Buksil had exaggerated when he screamed after being struck by the whip. This was a game so any type of pain would only be felt as static electricity. But the pain he felt now couldn't even be compared to that shock.

'Ugh! W-what is this pain? No, that bastard.....!'

When Ark glared at it, the Bloody cursed and swung its whip recklessly. The pain felt like his flesh was actually being struck!

"Please wait....."

At the time, the Flip came running and begged while on the ground.

"This, this guy is new..... I'll teach him so just this once....."

"Is it Flip?"

The Bloody looked between Ark and the Flip before turning away.

"Okay, I'll let it go just this once. Make sure you teach him properly."

"Thank you..... Hey, you.....! You should also say thank you....."

The Flip cringed and pushed Ark's head down into a bow. At that moment, Ark felt tears gather. He was level 314 yet he had to cringe before a monster? What the hell was this situation? However, there was no other way at the moment. In fact, he felt like tackling the Bloody but his body wouldn't move. It was reasonable because his stats had been reduced by 80%. In addition, he couldn't fight without his equipment or skills.

"Hey..... This human seems obedient..... Take him and make him work....."

"Heok! No, Ark-nim..... Hiik!"

Buksil panicked and shook his head, but an earthworm like monster just wound around Buksil and dragged him to a place with other monsters gathered. Meanwhile Ark accompanied the Flip to a workshop. Then it indicated Ark's ankle and spoke.

"You really have a sharp temper..... It is better to kill that temper..... It's not possible for you to escape anymore..... I know it is difficult but..... With those shackles, you won't be able to endure it if the Bloody whips you....."

"Shackles?"

Ark looked dubiously at his ankles. Although he hadn't been paying attention to it, his ankles had shackles tied around it. There were no chains connecting them so he had disregarded it. But Ark's face distorted when he examined the information window closely.

-Shackles of Pain

Shackles made by a vampire to hold his slaves.

These shackles have been created by the vampire's magic to increase all pain dealt to the body by 10 times. The shackles will automatically loosen if the vampire dies or you escape from its sphere of influence.

'Oh my god! There really are various measures.'

He had been caught by Chain of Blood and now he even had these shackles on him. Ark instantly felt very gloomy. What would he do next?

'What do I need to do? I need to escape from Karakul in order to release the Chain of Blood. I'm in no state to deal with Karakul and his Bloody at the moment. No, there is no guarantee I can deal with them even with all the monsters here. Besides, this place is underground. There is only one small passage to go aboveground.....'

No matter how hard he thought, there was no clue to solve the situation. Ark shook his head forcefully.

'I can't give up yet. Yes, this is still a game. If they trap users in this place then there should be a way to escape. There must be a way to clear the doorway. Even if my pride is injured, I have to pretend to follow their orders so I can collect information.'

Acting rebellious wouldn't help him. Wouldn't collecting information be easier if he wasn't struck all the time?

"I understand. I'll be careful from now on. Please teach me a lot."

"Uhh..... You've finally understood me....."

"So what do we have to do here?"

"For the moment..... Just dig in this area with the shovel....."

Ark obeyed Flip and started digging at the ground with a shovel. After 30 minutes had passed, he had dug up a lot of pebbles and sweat was trickling down his back.

‘Huk huk huk! Why the hell are we shovelling? Aren’t only pebbles coming out? Why are they making us do this? Were the monsters captured just to dig at the ground? Is that right?’

He was Seutandal’s hero but now he had been captured by a vampire and forced to shovel at the ground. Ark vented his anger by swinging his shovel even more powerfully. All of a sudden the Flip picked up a small pebble from among the earth and sand.

“This..... It’s what we are looking for.....”

The stone that Flip picked up emitted a pale light when he examined it.

Moon Rock (Hearthstone)

A hearthstone that has absorbed the magic of the moon for a long time.

It isn’t uncommon in New World to find mysterious stones that can absorb the magic around it. The nature of the stone will change depending on where it is buried. A stone buried in a volcano will take on fire properties. Stones buried on a snowy mountain will take on the property of ice. Stones that take on attributes are called hearthstones.

The Moon rock is also one of the hearthstones. The Moon rock which has absorbed the property of the moon has the ability to strengthen a character’s magic attribute. It is also effective in regaining mana when used as a magic ingredient. In addition, it will give mysterious powers to items with sockets.

<Directly used: Mana +10 when used directly, the Moon rock will disappear after being used>

<Used in socket (Armour only): Mana recovery +2%>

‘What is this? Hearthstone?’

Ark’s eyes widened as he looked at the stone. He had received a socket item a while ago. He never imagined that something could be inserted into the socket this way.

‘I can put this stone in the Promised Sword.’

But Ark made a disappointed expression after looking at the Moon rock closely. The effect when added to a socket was mana recovery +2%. The Promised Sword had four sockets so the effect would be 8% at most. Of course, it was better than nothing

but couldn't he find better hearthstones if he made an effort to look? Well, his bag was banned so he couldn't collect it anyway.

'Surely not all the Hearthstones would be trivial like this?'

The Flip saw Ark looking at the hearthstone and continued talking.

"Earl Karakul..... This is his purpose for us after we failed to become Bloody..... It is in order to mine these stones..... I don't understand too well..... The castle basement..... These Moon rocks have a different power compared to ordinary pebbles..... Karakul knows a method to increase his magic using these Moon rocks....."

"Is that how vampires can become stronger?"

"Hmm..... You really don't know anything..... Well, I have been bored without anyone to talk to here..... I'll explain it..... But don't stop moving your hands because the Bloody will see it....."

The Flip continued digging and murmured like he was complaining.

"Earl Karakul..... No, all the vampires that live here..... They're always waiting for the chance to attack each other's territory. So they have to raise their magic..... In order to lead more Bloody....."

"Huh? Doesn't the Vampire Lord rule here?"

"That is correct..... The Vampire Lord does control this area....."

"Yet he's just watching members of the clan fight each other?"

"That..... The vampire's scary point is....."

Flip had become quite bored without someone to converse with. It couldn't stop talking once it opened its mouth. In fact, the vampire was a species with enormous strength in magic but they had a lot of weaknesses. If they saw a cross or smelt garlic then they would become confused. In addition, the skin is sensitive so it would be burned if sunlight hit it. That wasn't all. In the real world that would be it but this was a game. Although it was impossible here, a priest with light magic could easily take care of vampires.

"The Vampire Lord is someone who has lived over 1000 years..... He is the highest ranked aristocrat..... Those weaknesses are all eventually conquered..... By

growth spurts in vampires..... He will only use his powers if the vampires are in danger of extinction.....”

That’s the reason he erected wards to protect the vampire clan. Thanks to the Lord, the vampires increased their numbers after the disappearance of their natural enemies. That’s the reason why the Lord overlooked all the fighting. Although the Dark Earth was wide, it wasn’t infinite. Since the vampires were near invincible inside the Dark Earth, population control was a problem. Moreover, the life expectancy of the vampires was hundreds of years so they wouldn’t die of old age.

“When the Dark Earth was first created..... All the vampires lived in the Lord’s castle..... But thanks to the numbers increasing excessively, now only the highest ranked aristocrats are allowed to live there..... Everyone else was expelled..... Even vampires would eventually age and die..... But the Lord is different..... He is immortal..... And the Immortal’s castle is a place where magic dominates..... It is a place where other vampires could also become immortal if they were selected.....”

That’s why all the vampires driven out were eager to return. In order to return to the castle, they had to defeat other aristocrat vampires and take away their territory to increase their status. The vampires who increased their power to the highest rank would be allowed entry to the Lord’s castle. Then that vampire’s territory would be distributed to new vampires and the war would begin again.

‘What the? Then the Lord created a war of fratricide as a solution to the population problem?’

It was absurd, but a fitting solution for a vampire to come up with.

“Fighting between vampires..... It’s more complicated than you think.....”

“What do you mean?”

Fighting between vampires was entirely different from a human’s war. The vampires who fought in the Dark Earth had several absolute rules they had to follow. It wasn’t that easy for vampires expelled from the castle to capture territory. In order to control their territory, the vampires had to imbue their own power into the soil. In other words, owning the soil would make that land theirs. That’s why the ones that led the Bloody were more likely to win.

“It is because the Bloody can fight in the Dark Earth..... There are also no restrictions on the Bloody..... In order to attack other castles or prevent being attacked, a vampire needed to increase the number of Bloody..... But no matter how many Bloody they lead..... It’s no use if the vampire itself is weak.”

“Why? Can’t overwhelming amounts of Bloody kill the ones on the other side and then the vampire?”

“I told you..... The vampires are under the protection of the Lord..... He doesn’t care if vampires kill each other..... It is only when other species kills a vampire..... They would incur the wrath of the Lord..... The Lord was an existence who once terrified the world..... It was to the extent that even the Dark Lord couldn’t recklessly anger him..... Even a dragon would die if it incurred the wrath of the Lord.....”

‘What the? Then even if I manage to escape this place and gain power, I can’t kill Karakul?’

Thanks to the Dark Earth, there was no guarantee that he could defeat Karakul in a 1-on-1 fight. But how strong would the Lord be compared to a high ranking aristocrat? He would truly die if he ever encountered such a monster.

‘The problem at the moment isn’t defeating Karakul.....’

“The vampires just use the Bloody to create a route..... It is the only method to enter enemy territory to ask for a duel..... Vampires can’t refuse when they receive a duelling challenge from another vampire..... That’s why the Bloody are no use to a weak vampire..... Only strong vampires like Karakul would mobilize the Bloody.....”

Among the expelled vampires, Karakul was quite strong. He had crushed many of the surrounding areas and gained considerable intelligence and status. Of course, other vampires would obtain those things if they defeated Karakul but there was none with the power in this area. That’s because Karakul used all his power to concentrate on defense.

“Life as a vampire truly isn’t easy.’

It was a species that had trouble living with family or other people.

“Earl Karakul has extremely strong magic..... It is thanks to these hearthstones..... These hearthstones only appear here.”

‘Is it really such a great item? This stone?’

Ark once again looked at the description of the Moon rock. It was a stone that had gained the property of the moon and increased magic, but it was just a normal stone to Ark. Although there was a mana recovery effect, it was only 10 mana at most. His skills used between 50 and 500 mana. He wouldn’t even be able to sell it for a few

silver in the stores. It was better to buy recovery potions even if they were more expensive. The socket item was also the same. He wouldn't even be able to sell it for a few silver in the stores.

'Well, I don't know if the information is useful but it is lucky that I encountered an NPC willing to give information. At least the information is more reliable than Albert.'

Ark needed to learn all the necessary information.

"By the way, have you ever seen a beast clan in the Dark Earth?"

"Beast clan..... I haven't seen anything like that..... But I've seen humans....."

Ark became puzzled at Flip's answer.

"Humans?"

"You might have seen them..... There are humans living near the coast..... I don't know why Karakul is leaving them alone....."

"But....."

Karakul said that no humans existed in Dark Earth. Therefore Ark thought that the villagers were also camouflaged Bloody. But they were people? Neither Karakul nor Flip had a reason to lie to him. If that's the case, who was wrong? Ark made a confused face. Then the Flip turned its head and spoke.

"By the way..... I have to explain why I've been kind to you since I've first seen you....."

"Huh?"

"I wanted to tell you..... Because I'm truly thankful....."

"Thankful? What do you mean?"

"That is the end of today's work. Everybody gather here!"

At that time, a group of Bloody entered the underground square. The monsters started trembling at the sight of the red eyes.

"Heh, you lowly things. Don't worry, they've already been selected. That plump fellow and the conceited one! Follow me, the Earl has summoned you."

The monsters sighed with relief as the Bloody pointed towards Ark and Buksil. While Ark was unsure of the situation, the Bloody pulled Ark and Buksil somewhere. Buksil shrieked and collapsed like a pig that was being led to a slaughterhouse. Unlike Buksil, he had no reason to resist just to earn the whip so Ark just followed silently. Then Ark started to suspect the situation when they arrived in Karakul's room.

"Huhuhu, you've come. I was waiting."

Karakul smacked his lips together with a joyful expression while a napkin was hanging around his neck.

'Oh my god! This bastard.....!'

"I'll eat thankfully!"

Karakul ran up to Buksil and immediately attacked with his fangs.

Suck suck suck, suck suck suck suck.

Buksil's already haggard face shrank even further as his blood was sucked out. Buksil became a mummy in an instant and Karakul rushed towards Ark. The dirty feeling of having all his blood sucked out! His body became colder and he felt dizzy. The appearance of his dead grandmother suddenly flickering in front of him. After he almost died, Karakul retreated and wiped his mouth.

"Mmmm, mmmm. Although it is regretful, overeating isn't good. But fresh human blood is so delicious. Once I've tasted it, I can't go back to tasting other blood. I'll just have these guys as my meals for a while. That's it, take them away."

'Damn, I'll kill you. Absolutely, no matter what it takes, I'll kill you!'

However, Ark and Buksil didn't even have the energy to lift a finger after being turned into mummies. The Bloody had to drag them like a piece of cloth.

'This is the second task Flip was talking about.'

Ark now understood the situation. Karakul hadn't captured the monsters simply for a labour force. They were also food for him. Flip was kind to Ark for that reason. Probably the monsters had been chosen at random so far. Now that the fresh blood of a human was added to the menu, he would never consider feeding on monsters. Thus Flip was grateful for Ark and Buksil taking on Karakul's meal duty.

'Oh my god, being forced to work and now I'm used as a lunchbox.....'

He was feeling the same as when he tried to suicide by jumping out the window. But his resurrection point had changed because of Chain of Blood. Committing suicide wouldn't do anything but cut his stats. The only consolation was that he didn't lose any stats when Karakul sucked his blood. When they arrived at the underground dungeon, all the other monsters were already sleeping.

'Hah, is there really no way to escape?'

Ark sighed before he suddenly heard Flip's voice in the darkness.

"It's better to give up early..... I've lived here for 20 years..... I'm still alive thanks to the magic of the vampires..... I've also never seen any monsters succeed in escaping..... Don't make it more difficult for yourself..... The next day will be the same so you should sleep early....."

Then the Flip lay down and started snoring. The voice of Buksil continuously sobbing could be heard beside him.

"Huk huk huk, it's over. The game is now over. Huk huk huk, now what? This is all because of Ark-nim. Why didn't you just let me return when I wanted to?"

'Damn, is there really no way?'

Ark had no energy to retort so he just sighed and leaned against the wall. It was at that time. Something moved around his waist and pushed out from his rags.

Ssak ssak, ssak ssak ssak!

"R-Radun.....!"

Ark exclaimed before blocking his mouth. He checked that all the monsters were still sleeping before whispering.

"Radun, how are you here?"

Radun thought about Ark's question but licking his tongue and twisting his body to make gestures. Ark started at him before quickly opening the character information window.

"Character information window!"

Chain of Blood has sealed all special traits.

Character Name	Ark	Race	Human
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Alignment		Good +450	
Fame	11,425	Level	314
Profession		Dark Walker	
Title		Cat Knight, Caretaker of the World Tree, Jackson's Hero, Great Adventurer, Magic Institute Member, Seutandal's Hero	
Health	5,005	Mana	4,995
Spiritual Power	200	Strength	604 (-80%)
Agility	764 (-80%)	Stamina	954 (-80%)
Wisdom	120 (-80%)	Intelligence	973 (-80%)
Luck	114 (-80%)	Flexibility	127(-80%)
Art of Communication	66 (-80%)	Affection	57 (-80%)
Resilience	415 (-80%)		
Special stat: Knowledge of Ancient Relics		138 (-80%)	
* Equipment item effects			
Chain of Blood has cancelled all equipment.			
* Character Special Traits			
Chain of Blood has sealed all special traits			
* Available skills			
Chain of Blood has sealed all skills.			
* Skill points: 30			

There were no changes in Ark's basic stats except for the 80% restriction. In other words Ark thought that he had died but he only lost consciousness thanks to Chain of Blood. Therefore Radun wasn't forcibly recalled. Since then, the clever Radun had hidden himself before sneaking out after the monsters fell asleep.

"Well done Radun!"

Radun was like a ray of light after Ark thought that everything was lost. Chain of Blood restricted his equipment, skills and use of his bags. But Radun had already been summoned. The restrictions applied to Ark didn't work on Radun.

"Radun, please pull out the items one by one from your stomach. There might be something helpful."

Ssak ssak, ssak ssak, ssak ssak!

Radun opened his mouth wide and pulled out the items one by one. He had placed quest items and treasures inside Radun. If he placed it in his main bags then there was a chance that it could drop.

'Oh, this is it! If I use this then I can solve this situation.'

The item Ark grasped was the Sacred Branch.

'I can communicate with Yggdrasil or Yuzuria when I use the Sacred Branch. Ark was going to call Yuzuria to ask for help from JusticeMan or Isabel.

Of course, the Flip mentioned that the Lord would be furious if Karakul was killed by other species but he would worry about it then. Since he couldn't escape from here, he had no time to worry about the game scenario that would ensue. But when he placed the Sacred Branch on his forehead, all he heard was static before a message window appeared.

-Your current location has no reception.

<The communication features of the Sacred Branch is blocked by Dark Blood>

Ark was lost for words. What was with the old-fashioned cell phone message? As expected, Yuzuria and Yggdrasil were no help in important situations. The next item Ark picked up was the Promised Sword he received from the Magic Institute.

'I had no intention of using this for the moment so I had placed it in Radun. It might become useful.'

Then Ark's dreadful fate started. Ark's daily routine was labouring in the morning before Karakul sucked his blood in the evening. He was also tired and in bad shape after returning to the dungeon. However, Ark waited until the monsters were asleep before using the sword to scratch away at the wall. It was like Papillion who escaped from jail using a spoon! But he had to give up after a couple of days. The rock wall of the jail was stronger than he thought. In addition, his stats were cut by 80% so it was hard for him to effectively use the sword. Ark also didn't have the patience to wait dozens of years to escape like Papillion. Ark started to become more anxious as his last possibility faded away.

'Unbelievable. What is an alternative method? Surely there must be a way to escape.....'

Bump!

Ark had been sighing while shovelling. Then his shovel suddenly hit a blunt object.

-Unidentified Monster Bone

The bones of a pitiful monster who died a long time ago from the labour.

"How dreadful."

In the distant future, it might be Ark's bones that were found. Ark sighed and started to throw the bone away when he suddenly stopped.

'Wait? Bones? Maybe.....?'

Ark considered something for a while before his eyes suddenly gleamed.

'Yes, that's it. Obviously a lot of other bones will be buried. I might be able to escape if I collect them. No, I can escape! Ohhhh, now there's a possibility!'

Ark avoided the eyes of the Bloody and quickly slipped the bone to Radun. Then he approached Buksil and whispered quietly.

"Buksil, please dig a bit deeper from now on. If you discover any bones then you should bring it to me without the Bloody knowing. Hopefully it will help us escape."

"Huh? H-how?"

"I'll explain later. Please just collect the bones."

Since then, Ark and Buksil started frantically shovelling. The monster bones were buried quite deeply. Thanks to that, Ark and Buksil had to dig two or three times deeper than the other monsters. Then it had almost been one week, or two days in reality.

-You have learnt a new skill.

Excavation (Beginner, passive): You're handling of a pickaxe and shovel has become more proficient. Thanks to Excavation, it has become easier to dig up the ground and the probability of finding items has increased.

In some cases, amazing treasures can be found buried in New World. If you ever feel suspicious of an area then you should dig it up.

<Shovel and pickaxe speed +20%, Item excavation probability +10%>

"Ohu, what is this?"

Despite his skills being blocked, he could still learn new skills. The skill made excavating the monster bones even easier. The items he found started pouring out from the ground. Of course, most of it was pieces of metal, wood or other miscellaneous items. But because he shovelled the whole day, sometimes he would find jewels like emeralds or amethyst.

'The jewels are cracked so they'll only be worth a few silver but it is still something. I also have to collect as much Moon rocks as possible.'

The quota of Moon rocks assigned to each prisoner a day was 10. When he first started digging, he was barely able to reach that amount. Now thanks to his Excavation skill, he could dig up 20 in one day. After Ark filled his quota, he would pack everything else into Radun. It was a gloomy situation but he still had to make money. He could feel this way because hope was visible.

'Okay, I have to keep this momentum going!'

Ark became even more motivated and started digging even harder.

"Huh! That guy, he's not playing around."

"How can he have such energy when the Earl sucks his blood every evening?"

"Hey, newbie. You should take a break. We'll be in trouble if you collapse."

It was to the extent that the Bloody were worried about him. Ark just wiped his sweat and smiled brightly.

“Please don’t worry, my body is very durable. I will work hard for the Earl!”

“By the way, the human really isn’t talented. He works so hard but can barely fill his quota.”

The Bloody clicked their tongues and muttered. They never imagined that Ark was using Radun to stash the items. After his many blisters turned into hard calluses, his Excavation skill finally rose to intermediate. His hands holding the shovel became even faster like a motor. The odds of finding bones, trash and Moon rocks also rose to 20%. Thanks to that, Ark once again became more motivated and dug into the ground as hard as possible. Then there was a ringing sound and a message window appeared.

-Your skilled workmanship has dug up a rare product.

<Excavation skill proficiency +10>

-Vampire Stone (Rare Hearthstone)

For hundreds of years, this hearthstone has absorbed the magic of a vampire. The hearthstones that have managed to absorb the magic of a vampire can be counted on one hand.

Of course, the hearthstone can be used as a deluxe magic ingredient or it can give the attributes of a vampire when inserted in a socket.

<Used in socket (Weapon only): You can absorb 5% of the enemy’s damage and have it converted to health>

‘Ohhh, w-what is this?’

Ark’s eyes widened by one centimetre as he confirmed the item information. In other words, it was a rare hearthstone that had absorbed Karakul’s magic for hundreds of years. As expected, the performance of a rare hearthstone couldn’t be compared to a normal Moon rock. It was an effect which absorbed 5% of the enemy’s damage! In other words, if he received 100 damage then he could recover 5 health. It might not seem that great, but monsters level 300 could deal between 6,000~8,000 damage with one attack. Based on the percentage, he could recover 300~400 health. It was as effective as drinking an intermediate recovery potion.

‘Gulp, if I manage to find four of these hearthstones and socket them.....’

20% life absorption! It would make it possible to hunt monsters of a similar level infinitely! Although he frantically dug around, another Vampire Stone never appeared. It was actually a miracle that he managed to find a rare hearthstone when his excavation skill was only intermediate level. He had been digging 20 hours a day for a week. Although he never rested during that time, the probability of finding it was still really low. It was almost impossible that a few rare hearthstones would appear in the same place. Anyway, he finally managed to collect enough bones after a week.

“Radun, I want you to sneak around secretly and find any type of string. Something like wire would be best.”

Ssak ssak, ssak ssak ssak ssak!

Radun nodded and headed towards a mouse hole in a corner of the jail. He soon returned carrying a strand of something resembling thread.

‘Now’s the troublesome part.’

Ark confirmed that the monsters were sleeping and pulled out all the bones. He stayed all up night making the escape tool that he took one week to prepare.

— — — — —

“.....As expected, I never get tired of it no matter how much I eat. That’s it, I’ll stop here.”

Karakul murmured after finishing his meal. Once again Ark and Buksil had collapsed. It was evening and they had been called to become Karakul’s dinner again.

‘Ugh, I still haven’t got used to the feeling.’

Although it was only 1 day for NPCs, one day was 8 hours in reality. Since it was 8 days in reality including today, his blood had been sucked twenty four times. He hoped that he would become familiar with it, but he would get goose bumps every time the fans entered his neck. And since they were chosen on a daily basis, Ark and Buksil soon became as skinny as sticks.

“Hmmm, they’ve become increasingly smaller. Should I let them grow for a few days?”

The two of them looked so pitiful that even Karakul was talking like that.

‘Damn bastard, today will be the last time. I’ll escape no matter what!’

Ark and Buksil were dragged out to the hallway by the Bloody. As soon as they left the room, Ark wobbled and pushed off the hands.

“Ah, I can walk by myself. Is that okay?”

Buksil also smiled weakly and nodded his head.

“Yes, yes, hahaha! I’ve already adapted to it.”

“Heh, then go ahead.”

The Bloody hesitated before grinning and replying. They judged that the two of them couldn’t run away. They couldn’t even walk properly so how could they escape from the Bloody? The Bloody surrounded them as they walked down the hallway. Just as they walked past a large window, Ark grabbed Buksil and jumped onto the railing. The Bloody turned around and flinched.

“Hey, what are you doing?”

“This fool, is he trying to jump off and commit suicide?”

“They’ve been caught by the Earl’s magic so suicide is useless.”

“Suicide? No, we’re escaping.”

“What?”

“Now Radun, hang glider!”

Ark shouted powerfully. Radun poked his mouth out and spat out an item. Just like a genie appearing from a magic lamp, it was a black object over 10 metres long. Yes, this was what Ark had prepared to escape! A hang glider. Ark had collected the durable bones over previous week and tied them together to produce a hang glider. Ark had the idea after seeing an item inside Radun.

Grimwing’s Wing (Special)

The wings of a bat made huge through mutation.

The purpose is unclear, but it is obviously a rare item.

If might become useful later on.....

It was Grimwing’s Wing that he obtained in the Argus Mountains. So far the purpose of the item had been unclear. The wing was folded, but once stretched out it

was an incredible size. The length from left to right reached 10 metres! Ark had looked at the shape and remembered a hang glider. One of the reasons Ark couldn't escape was the location of the castle. Karakul's castle was located on cliffs dozens of metres high. On the other hand, his special quality 'Slime's Time' had been sealed so he couldn't use it to invalidate the fall damage. If he jumped through the window then he would 100% die.

'But it is possible to fly in the air.....!'

He might be able to escape from the castle and Karakul's sphere of influence. However, there was one problem with this plan. It was whether the hang glider could handle two people. However, Ark and Buksil had their blood sucked twenty four times by Karakul. Their status had changed to mummies after having their blood sucked just now.

"Buksil, maintain the centre well!"

"Yes, I'll do whatever it takes to escape from this place!"

"Okay, let's go!"

Ark and Buksil ran and jumped off the railing. When the hang glider suddenly fell, it wobbled for a while but they managed to figure out the balance.

"Eh, t-those guys.....!"

"Run, we can't lose them!"

The Bloody cried out in large voices as they finally grasped the situation. But Ark had jumped off the 10th storey and Karakul's territory was too large for the Bloody to chase him.

"Ark-nim, we did it!"

Buksil became tearful at the thought of escaping from the demonic Karakul. But they suddenly heard a rough voice from behind them.

"You impertinent bastards, you think you can get away from me?"

"Hik, A-Ark-nim!"

Buksil turned around and his face turned pale. Karakul had heard the news and chased after them through the window. Karakul was a vampire so he could turn himself into a bat.

"That abnormal bastard.....!"

There was a tight knot in Ark's stomach. Although it could fly through the sky, the hang glider wasn't powerful. On the other hand, Karakul could directly chase them with his wings so of course he was faster than the hang glider. Karakul caught up with Ark after 5 minutes and attacked the hang glider with his sharp claws.

"Hik, hik! It tore the wings!"

"Damn, I know! Don't shake your body!"

"Hehehe, what silly people!"

The wings became tattered every time Karakul flew over them. Therefore the hang glider's speed gradually slowed down. Buksil was unable to balance himself and the hang glider started shaking.

'At this rate, we'll fall before we escape the sphere of influence. Everything is finished if I die. The Bloody now know about Radun so there will be no second chances.'

Ark bit his lip before speaking.

"Buksil, I'll definitely come and rescue you."

"Huh? What are you.....?"

"I'm sorry. Isn't it better if I live and rescue you?"

"Hik! Ark-nim, w-wait a moment!"

"Buksil, I won't forget your courageous sacrifice."

Ark turned around and aimed a powerful kick at Buksil.

"Haaayaahh! Pig missile launch!"

"Aaaaaaak, A-Ark-nim!"

"Huk, what, what the?" Cough!"

Buksil was thrown at the exact moment Karakul came to attack and they collided. Karakul who encountered the pig missile fell from the sky like a plane without wings and crashed. Buksil's scream and Karakul's cold, furious voice could be heard.

“Ark-nim, yooooooooooooou.....”

“Y-you..... Are you even humannnnnn.....?”

“I have no reason to listen to words from you!”

Ark shamelessly answered as he flew across the sky. The sweet taste of freedom after experiencing hell for 8 days..... It really was sweet.

Act 8: The Boy Dedric

-You’ve escaped from Karakul’s sphere of influence.

Chain of Blood has been lifted.

Shackles of Pain has been released.

‘That’s it! Success!’

It had been 10 minutes since he had escaped after shooting the pig missile at Karakul. After he crossed a small river and the forest changed, the message window appeared and the shackles fell off.

‘I’ve escaped Karakul’s territory. The Bloody are too far to reach me and a vampire can’t leave its territory so I don’t have to worry about Karakul chasing me.

Ark found a suitable place and landed.

“This might be useful again, Magic Restoration!”

He used advanced Magic Restoration to fix the hang glider. Ark felt touched as he looked at it. It was the first time he had used a skill in 8 days. But he didn’t have time to enjoy himself. He might’ve escaped Karakul’s territory but he was in the territory of another vampire. He couldn’t guarantee what would happen.

‘I better use Stealth to look for a suitable hiding place and do maintenance on myself.’

Ark gave the hang glider to Radun and used Stealth. Then a red warning message floated in front of Ark.

-Hostile forces are watching so you can’t use Stealth!

'Huk, what, what the? I haven't even worn my equipment properly.....!'

It wasn't possible to change equipment when in a battle state. Fortunately, swords and shields were the exception so he took out his sword. But he was lacking in defense. Yet he couldn't run away carelessly. He might attract even more enemies.

'Damn, it better not be another vampire's Bloody. I'll commit suicide if a vampire captures me again.'

In the worst case scenario, Ark would commit suicide so he observed the surroundings. However, it kept on being quiet so he felt uneasy.

"Huhuhu, it's a meal."

A voice was audible in the gloomy forest.

"I've never seen this guy around here before."

"He's a little dirty but he should be a fine meal after we wash him."

'Oh my god, there are three of them.....!'

Ark swallowed his saliva. There were few monsters in the Dark Earth, with the vampires being the majority. In other words, he was either meeting the subordinates of a Vampire Lord or monsters with equal power. Either way, Ark couldn't fight against them with no defense.

'Dammit! I'm such an unlucky guy..... I just managed to escape from one vampire castle. Should I kill myself before it is too late?'

Ark was seriously contemplating suicide. Then something like an arrow flew from the forest. Ark had been lost in thought and reflexively swung his sword. If it was the Bloody, such a clumsy counter attack would be easily evaded. Although he was tense, his sword dealt a direct hit.

"Ugh!"

Something hit the ground as it was struck by his sword.

"Ack, he hit our colleague!"

"Shit, he is strong. A-3 plan, pincer movement to the left and right!"

Ark stared with astonishment at his opponents. The one that had fallen to the ground was a bat struggling to flap its wings. All of them were incredibly weak bats.

'What the, who are these guys? And did they just say plan A-3?'

"Uhh, this bastard...! A strong enemy!"

"He's clearly an expert in sword mastery considering how quickly he took care of us."

"You, although you look like a human..... Ugh, w-what are you? Uhh! Help me!"

Ark pressed his foot against the stomach of a bat and watch in surprise as it struggled and flapped its wings. Then he removed his leg and held the bat by the head.

"W-what are you doing?"

"Do you want to die?"

"I was careless just now but I'll fight you properly....."

"Fight properly?"

Ark lowered his face to the bat and growled, making it retreat a little bit. Then it muttered in a terrified and tearful voice.

"You..... You..... You'll regret this."

"Regret? I won't regret it."

"You really are going to regret it. Our Lord is close by.....!"

"R-really..... Our Lord is unbelievably strong!"

"Earl Karakul in the next town can't even touch our Lord!"

The playfulness disappeared from Ark's face at the bat's words. The bats were so weak that he had become careless. If this area was right next to Karakul then wouldn't the Lord be as powerful as him? And the bats were subordinates of that vampire!

'I forgot, it's not just the bats I have to deal with!'

Ark hurriedly withdrew. Thanks to the bats, he had been unable to use Stealth and he hadn't even had a chance to wear his equipment so he couldn't face a vampire. The momentum immediately went to the bats as Ark retreated.

"Huhuhu, you've finally grasped the situation."

"But it's too late. We've already mentally contacted our Lord to tell him that there is an intruder. He'll arrive soon."

"You're finished when our Lord arrives!"

It was at that time. A nearby bush shook and a voice rang out.

"Roaaaar, how dare somebody invade my territory!"

"Lord, over here!"

The bats flapped their wings and shouted.

'Dammit!'

The voice had been heard from the forest right in front of him. If the vampire could turn himself into a bat like Karakul then it was too late to run away.

'It can't be helped. The only method in this state is suicide.'

Ark ground his teeth together and lifted his sword. Then the voice rang through the forest again.

"I'll count to three. If you want to live then run away before then!"

'Eh? What is this?'

Ark's determined face suddenly changed. He got three seconds to run away? Did that sound like a vampire? That wasn't the only strange part. The opponent shaking the forest had appeared just then. But he wasn't showing himself.

'What on earth is this? Wait..... Which reminds me, this voice.....? It is familiar..... The bats also shouted plan A-3 earlier..... Perhaps.....?'

The voice in the forest hesitated before shouting.

"Two and a quarter..... Uhh, you should run away quickly. I don't often spare people. Two again....you still haven't escaped? There are really no more chances. Two and a half....."

'Indeed, I've seen through this.'

Ark slung his sword over his shoulders and walked into the forest. After walking through the bushes, he saw the quivering form of a boy shouting through a megaphone.

"Huhuhu, this is really your last chance, two and three quarters....."

".....Sheesh."

The boy retreated with surprise at Ark's voice. Then he stared dumbly at Ark's face.

"Lord, Lord, this guy! It's him!"

The bats couldn't grasp the strange atmosphere between Ark and the boy. The boy acted like he didn't hear anything and turned around with a pleasant smile. Then he walked away stiffly like a wound up toy doll.

"Eh? Lord?"

"Where are you going? What about this guy?"

".....Stop moving!"

Ark smiled and spoke, making the boy instantly stiffen. The boy paused awkwardly before turning around and speaking.

"Ah, that is..... Um..... It's been a while?"

The vampire boy speaking was Dedric. The bats looked confused at Dedric's reaction.

"Eh? Lord, do you know this human?"

"Ah, well..... This is the person who summons me....."

"Heok! T-this person is the Ark you were talking about?"

They freaked out and looked at the arc.

'Huhuhu those cheeky bats, they now understand the situation!'

Ark folded his arms and stared at the bats. He never imagined that he would encounter Dedric this way. After meeting Dedric, he was now certain about the pecking order. Ark was Dedric's Master while the bats were his subordinates. In other words, he was the Master of the bat's Master. He expected that the bats would shed tears and beg for forgiveness after hearing about Ark's reputation from Dedric.

"This is the human that summons our Lord."

'Heh, they've finally realised? Now beg me for forgiveness. But I have no intention of forgiving you.'

Ark was seriously contemplating how to cook the bats.

"This guy is the unscrupulous and cheapskate human?"

"I heard that he was really wicked. But didn't our Lord use his charisma to educate the human? Our Lord is too wonderful."

"The human became strong after learning from our Lord."

Ark's expression became vacant after hearing the bats' words. Dedric belatedly noticed the situation as Ark muttered.

"Oh, this is the first time I heard those words? Is that what Dedric told you?"

"Ah, no I....."

Ark stepped towards Dedric who retreated with a fearful look. As expected, the ignorant were courageous. One of the bats had punched Ark's head and shouted.

"What, this brat! How dare a subordinate call him Dedric?"

"Subordinate? I'm Dedric's subordinate?"

"He really is an ungrateful bastard. Didn't his status rise because of Our Lord?"

"Our Lord is gentle so he might forgive you, but we won't permit it. If you call our Lord by that name excessively....."

The last thread of Ark's patience broke inside him.

"Excessively?"

Ark laughed with an odd expression and approached.

"What did you say? When did I call his name excessively? Huh?"

"What, what the! This brat, what's with that look?"

The bats flinched and sent a begging look towards Dedric.

"Lord....."

“Oh oh! Yes, our Lord, what did you call him? How can a human like you call the name Dedric excessively?”

Ark continued laughing and approached, making Dedric turn pale and terrified. Then Ark raised his fist underneath Dedric’s nose, causing Dedric to squeal and secretly speaking in Ark’s ear.

‘M-master! P-please let it go just this once! Afterwards Master can hit me as much as you want until your anger is released. But please endure it in front of those guys. It’s a request. I won’t say unnecessary drivel even when diving down a dragon’s mouth. Huk huk huk, I swear! I’ll do whatever you want in the future.’

Ark instantly stopped his movements. Ark had grasped the situation thanks to Dedric’s desperate voice. Although he was mistreated by Ark, Dedric was still a vampire aristocrat. It had its own standards and behaviour. It must be really important to have Dedric begging so earnestly.

‘Which reminds me, doesn’t this guy have a surprisingly strong ego? If it is cracked here then he might become even worse. It is better than having to keep on disciplining him..... Dedric’s help is also necessary so wouldn’t it be better to have him owe me a favour now? This will be a convenient method to control Dedric in the future.’

Ark sighed loudly and took one step back.

“Okay. I’ll be careful from now on. Dedric-nim.”

Dedric sighed with relief after Ark’s words. Fortunately for them, the bats were able to live even after they kicked Ark again.

“What the, this brat! Why did you cause such a strange atmosphere?”

“We’re the seniors. You should use honorifics with us in the future!” “S-stop. You morons!”

Dedric ran over and stopped the bats after seeing Ark’s expression. In fact, his face didn’t seem that angry.

“S-sorry. These guys are still immature.....”

“No it’s fine. It can’t be helped. I am Dedric-nim’s subordinate. We talk about the details later. There is plenty of time.”

Ark grinned and replied while an angry vein bulged on his forehead. Anyway, the situation was somehow resolved and Ark headed towards Dedric's castle (?). It wasn't a long way as Dedric's castle was only 10 metres away. No, in fact Dedric's castle was only 10 metres. Dedric's castle looked like a beggar's hut built underneath a bridge, with wood planks being tied together with gaps for wind. However, straw mats divided the hut into two areas, with one room used by the bat siblings with the other one was split into Dedric's office, bedroom, living room and kitchen.

"Our Lord has integrity."

"Yes, he's too scrupulous to snatch the territory of other vampires."

The bats said proudly. Thanks to that, Ark's plan of disciplining Dedric disappeared. Ark had been thinking about what to do while walking towards Dedric's house. It felt like the time when a teacher visited him and saw that he was so poor his socks had holes in them. How could he stay angry?

Anyway, Dedric's followers were still young bats. They fell asleep as soon as they arrived at the castle. Dedric moved to the adjoining room and immediately changed his attitude, prostrating himself on the floor in front of Ark.

"Oh oh oh, M- Master. Thank you. You can hit me as much as you want later. I'll work really hard and will complete your objective even if I have to die."

Ark looked at Dedric and sighed before asking.

"Didn't you inherit Dunphil's assets?"

"That....."

Dedric started to sob and confessed his hidden circumstances. Among all the vampires, Dunphil wasn't exactly the coolest one. He had no talent in making Bloody and he also had no idea how to increase his magic. Luckily for Dunphil, no other vampires coveted his territory so he somehow managed to survive.

"But then Earl Karakul increased his power and defeated the surrounding vampires. He had lived on the other side, but now Karakul's territory was right next to him after all the territory was taken. Therefore the cowardly Dunphil fled to this piece of land and offered Karakul the rest of his territory."

This was the reason Dunphil was able to survive the strong vampires. But then he had his property taken away by Dedric not long afterwards.

'Dunphil was such a weak vampire that he even lost to Dedric so of course I wouldn't know how strong Karakul is. By the way, didn't Dunphil act ridiculously arrogant when he first appeared? Is pretending a natural characteristic of the vampires?

"Ah? Were the bats subordinates of Dunphil?"

"No, they are my cousins who lived in a cave west of here."

Dedric blushed and scratched his head.

"The best way for bats to succeed is to become the subordinate of a Vampire Lord."

It was extremely difficult for bats to become subordinates of a vampire in Dark Earth. The battle capacity was a lot lower than the Bloody so they were mainly used as messengers by the vampires.

"It's to the extent that my parents hosted a feast after I became Dunphil's subordinate."

Dedric became nostalgic as he recalled his memories. But soon after Dedric became a subordinate, he was bullied by the other bats and expelled by Dunphil. Dedric's parents were so shocked that they died from the impact while Dedric was driven out by his clan for dishonouring them and forced to live in the cave. That was the reason why Dedric burnt with hatred for Dunphil.

"Afterwards I wandered for a long time."

Dedric looked 10 years old but he muttered in a delinquent type tone. Anyway, Dedric wandered until he accidentally became Ark's summon. He was then able to slay Dunphil and suddenly became a vampire aristocrat. He was still a Lord even if his territory was like a beggar's. Not too long ago, he wandered around and discovered that his uncle had died and his cousins were orphans..... It was an impressive tale of a bat's hardships.

"Lord-nim..... I'll defend the territory....."

While they were talking, one of the bats kicked the blanket and talked in his sleep. Dedric covered him up again and came back with a strange expression.

"These guys think that I'm the best. I want to succeed for them....."

'I finally know why Dedric cares about his status so much. Until now I just thought of him as a summon with no manners, but he unexpectedly has some depth. It is better than some people.'

He remembered his uncle who had suddenly appeared after Ark hadn't seen him for a long time. His uncle had always showed up to beg for money from his father before leaving. But his uncle never showed his face when Ark's father died and his mother was hospitalized. In New World, only the basic character was programmed and their actual behaviour was determined on its own using artificial intelligence. Thus all Dedric's actions were chosen by him. In that case, wasn't an NPC like Dedric more human than his uncle?

'These bats were the reason why Dedric was eager to go home?'

Ark rethought the situation after hearing Dedric's circumstances.

"Okay, I'll protect your honour while we are here.

"Really?"

"Now you have to work even more eagerly when I summon you."

"Thank you, Master. Master is also a human!"

"What?"

"Ah, nothing!"

Dedric quickly closed his mouth and shook his head. Before those actions would seem hateful, but now they weren't for some reason.

"But Master, how will you summon me now that Seutandal has risen?"

"Don't worry, I've found a method."

Ark explained the Summoning Port to Dedric who nodded.

"Then are we leaving immediately?"

"No, I still have some things to finish."

"What is it?"

"I have to rescue Buksil but..... That's a secondary problem. The most important thing is finding information about the Three Marvels."

Of course he had to help Buksil. He also had to return the favour to Karakul. Although actually killing Karakul was a problem, his pride was too strong to allow him to just leave. He had to at least destroy all of Karakul's Bloody. However, he had no confidence in his abilities.

'But it might be possible if I get my hands on the final fragment and change to my second profession.'

"Is a fragment of the Three Marvels here?"

Dedric's eyes widened.

"But I've never heard of any Beast clans here."

"I can guess a place. Let me summon you and we'll go together."

Ark laughed as he got up from his seat. He registered Dedric to the Summoning Port and summoned him. Apart from the high ranking vampires in the Immortal's castle, vampires couldn't leave their estates. Dedric was the same. However, Dedric was a vampire and a summon. He could go anywhere in the world with Ark.

"They are the beast clan?"

"Yes, if my guess is correct....."

Ark nodded and looked at the village. This village was the first place Ark visited in Dark Earth. While Ark had been trapped in the castle, he had gained various information about Dark Earth from the Flip. After several clues were combined, he was convinced that the beast clan lived here.

"How are these people the Beast clan? No matter how hard I look, they are humans. This is the territory of the powerful vampire Karakul I spoke about. I heard that he possesses the ability to disguise his subordinates as humans."

"I'm aware of that. I've already met Karakul."

"Eh? You've met Karakul? Why didn't you say anything?"

"Yes, there's still a debt I have to repay. I also have to take back the baggage."

"W-wait! What are you saying? Surely Master isn't....."

Dedric panicked and shook his head as soon as Karakul was brought up.

"I don't want to know what you're talking about. Karakul rules this region. If I oppose him just a little bit than my territory will disappear. Frankly, it's dangerous enough just having my territory close to Karakul. If they are Karakul's subordinates....."

"That's why I'm going to confirm it now."

"Hik, w-wait a minute!"

Dedric pulled Ark's collar with surprise. However Ark just dragged Dedric into the village. Once again the resident sitting near the entrance of the village became frightened like he saw a ghost and ran off. Ark used Sprint to block the villager's path and laughed.

"I just want to talk for a moment."

"W-why are you doing this? I don't know anything. I don't want to care!"

"I haven't said anything yet. You don't know what? Why don't you want to care?"

"T-that....."

"As expected, the residents here aren't Karakul's subordinates."

Ark was now convinced he was right by the villager's reaction. If these people were Bloody transformed into humans then they would've aggressively lured him like Albert. However, the villagers had reacted like Ark was trouble from the first time they saw him.

'Even if my idea is wrong, the village is near the coast. It is possible for me to run away.'

Therefore Ark had targeted the time when villagers would be scarce and entered.

'But this is the important part.'

"I just have one thing I would like to ask."

"W-what is it?"

"Have you ever seen anything like this?"

Ark took out the two fragments of the Three Marvels from his bag. The villager's eyes popped out like a missile.

"T-that..... Where did you get that? Perhaps you are.....?"

"The Truthseeker."

The villager turned pale and stumbled at Ark's answer. Then he suddenly looked around and spoke quickly.

"This place is dangerous. Come this way."

The villager pulled Ark into a nearby house. An old man inside the house flinched and stood up as Ark entered. But the villager quickly approached and whispered in his ear, causing the old man's eyes to widen and scan Ark. He hesitated and looked outside through the window gap before sighing with relief and sitting down.

"Fortunately it's not here today."

"What do you mean?"

"The eye. Earl Karakul's eye. When you entered the village the first time, you smelt like you were a colleague of Karakul. So we thought you were a person that Karakul sent. We only knew about the misunderstanding after Albert appeared..... I never imagined that you would still be alive."

"Hah, so that was what happened?"

Ark now understood the reaction of the villagers. The old man looked apologetically at Ark before he spoke in a begging tone.

".....Can you show the fragments of the Three Marvels again?"

Ark nodded and pulled it out again. The old man's eyes brimmed with tears as he stared at the Three Marvels before muttering.

"Ohhhh! It's real. This is unmistakably the Three Marvels. I can clearly see that this is the 'Star' and 'Dark' pieces."

"Yes, this is clearly the Three Marvels. And you are the beast clan who possesses the final piece."

The old man sighed and his shoulders slumped.

".....How did you know?"

The reason Ark was convinced they were the beast clan was easy. Karakul said that there were no humans living in Dark Earth. However, Flip said that it had seen

humans. Their claims conflicted with each other so which one was telling the truth? Ark struggled with it before eventually reaching the conclusion that both were true. In other words, there was only one explanation. The vampire was an existence that was closer to humans than to monsters. Just in their outward appearances, a vampire was closer to humans than orcs. When looking at the Meow, mermaids or raccoon clan, it was impossible to consider them 'human.' In the view of vampires, beasts were non-human. On the other hand, monsters would 100% see the beast clan as human. They were a species that monsters consider human yet vampires didn't consider human. It could only be a beast clan. The old man nodded with a bittersweet look at Ark's description.

"Yes, we are the beast clan like you guessed."

"But why do you look like humans?"

That was the only part Ark was worried about. Although the villagers looked tough, they looked nothing like a beast. He thought it was similar to Karakul's ability to transform his subordinates. There was no other reason for the villagers to be alive while in Karakul's territory. Thus Ark had secured a route of escape.

"Perhaps the beast clan are the subordinates of Karakul?"

"That..... No. Subordinates? Absolutely not! Although our bodies might be seized by Karakul, we have never sold our souls."

While Ark was conversing with Ark, the villager who had been watching the outside through the window shouted angrily.

"Then this is your natural form?"

"No we are the wolf clan who have inherited the blood of Fenrir, the first wolf."

"Wolf clan?"

"Yes among all the wolf clans, we are the Wolrang family who has inherited the lineage of a noble warrior."

The old man breathed in deeply before speaking.

"I am the elder of the Wolrang clan. The Wolrang were trapped in Dark Earth 100 years ago." The elder started his lecture on the history of the Wolrang family.

Although the Meow also had a warrior lineage, they were closer to thieves. On the other hand, the Wolf clan was a pure warrior lineage so the only profession available was warrior. And the Wolrang were the strongest among the Wolf clan.

“During the Dark Century hundreds of years ago, the Wolrang fought at the front lines with Hero Maban against the dark forces. It was truly an honourable battle. A large number of our kin died but there was no regret. That time was probably the golden age of the Wolrang family. I would’ve rather been born then.....”

The elder muttered with sad eyes as he seemed to look in the past. And it happened near the end of the Dark Century. The 7 heroes fought against the Dark Lord while the Wolrang were given another mission. It was to head to Seutandal with allies in order to stop the aerial attack of the Rwigenberg. The Wolrang accepted this dangerous mission and waged a bloody battle against the Rwigenberg. Thanks to warriors’ sacrifices, Seutandal was relatively unharmed despite the Rwigenberg’s invasion. Then the 7 heroes defeated the Dark Lord and he unleashed his ultimate destruction magic, trapping Seutandal in the dimensional storm. Therefore the Wolrang family became trapped on Seutandal. The place where they battled the Rwigenberg was the area where the mountains converged that Beseutyu pointed out. It was on the soaring cliffs where there was only the storm present.

“The lives of our isolated ancestors then became very miserable. The earth in that area had died. They had to risk their lives for a blade of grass or a sip of water.”

The Wolrang who had fought fiercely on the front lines fell victim to hunger and cold. The Wolrang who had survived numerous battles started dying one by one.

“Huk, I know how that feels. Dying yet never getting any sympathy in return.”

Dedric muttered with tearful eyes as he sat on Ark’s shoulders. However, the elder of the Wolrang was different from the bat with no manners.

“No, we hadn’t expected anything in return for fighting the darkness. We just wanted to fight and die honourably like a warrior. I think that was the most painful thing for our ancestors. There was no honour. It was only an empty death.”

Anyway, the Wolrang wandered the mountains for 100 years.

“Our ancestors eventually found the land filled with darkness. This place was already dominated by vampires but our ancestors had no choice. No, I think they were hoping to fight against the vampires in order to die. But that didn’t happen. The place they arrived at was Dunphil’s territory who proposed peace.”

‘Eh? Dunphil? Ah, that’s right. Didn’t this area originally belong to Dunphil?’

It was all connected? After the Wolrang family appeared, Dunphil was so cowardly that he proposed peace straight away. However things changed a few years ago. Dunphil handed his territory to Karakul and ran away. Karakul wasn't weak like Dunphil.

"Karakul tried to make us his subordinates. But even if the Wolrang had lost our former glory, we would rather die than become subordinates of a vampire."

Therefore Karakul and the Wolrang waged a war against each other. After battling fiercely for a decade and many sacrifices, the Wolrang had finally managed to kill most of the Bloody and reached Karakul's castle.

"We were one step away from deciding Karakul's fate. Then....."

The elder bit his lip and muttered.

"One of the eve of the decisive battle, someone in the clan betrayed us. Albert..... He stole our clan's treasure and offered it to Karakul. He stepped on all the honour that our ancestors had built up!"

"W-wait a minute. The clan's treasure? Don't tell me.....?"

Ark asked with surprise and the elder instantly nodded.

"Yes, it is the fragment of the Three Marvels that you are looking for."

Ark became confused by the elder's answer. He thought that the beast clan would give him the Three Marvels after he found them. So he had considered a way to rescue Buksil after gaining that power. But now the Three Marvels was in Karakul's possession? Didn't that mean he had to defeat Karakul before he could obtain the Three Marvels?

'Hasn't this problem just become more complicated?'

"Hero Maban left the treasure to us before he went to fight the Dark Lord. He believed in us. To have Hero Maban's legacy taken away by a mere vampire..... It was our greatest shame. Truthseeker, you're welcome to laugh at us. Although our ancestors have given us sharp fangs and claws, our minds have dulled..... We deserve it for losing the clan's treasure."

The elder spoke in a self-mocking voice. The Wolrang's courage also disappeared after losing their treasure. They lost their power to fight and were trapped here, with Karakul often coming to suck their blood. Although their features had changed, their

blood they inherited from warriors who fought against the Dark Lord still strengthened Karakul. Every day was humiliating for the Wolrang clan.

At that time, Ark noticed something strange.

“Then your appearance changed after losing the Three Marvels?”

Ark had thought the reason the Wolrang changed was because Karakul cursed them. If they lost their strength after losing the Three Marvels then how could they fight alongside Hero Maban? However, the answer was surprisingly simple.

“The source of our power is the moon. Therefore we are even more powerful in the evening under the moonlight. We are weaker during the day as the moon isn’t visible but it still exists. Thus the Wolrang clan could maintain its form. But thanks to the strength of the darkness here, the Wolrang had difficulty maintaining our features.”

The Wolrang were similar to werewolves. However, there were a few differences as they could maintain the appearance of a wolf during the day and night. But the Wolrang weren’t able to maintain the wolf features because the power of the moon was blocked..... So the Wolrang used the power of the Three Marvels.

“Our clan holds the ‘Moon Piece.’ The treasure contains the power of the moon. So we were able to receive the protection of the moon here. But we lost that power after Karakul received the moon piece.”

‘The Moon Piece!’

Ark’s spirit felt refreshed.

‘My last question has been answered!’

He had been wondering why Karakul trapped the Wolrang here and not in his castle. Even if the Wolrang had the shape of humans, they could still be trapped in the dungeon to be used as labour. The reason the Wolrang weren’t trapped in the underground jail was because there was a possibility of them regaining their power. Yes, it was the dungeon where Ark had been forced to labour. Karakul had obviously hidden the Moon Piece somewhere in that dungeon. The reason why the Moon Rocks were created was because they absorbed power from the Moon Piece.

‘All my questions are answered!’

It was the feeling of a complicated knot finally being undone. Karakul was the key to all his problems. He had no choice but to defeat Karakul to find the final fragment.

Although he could use 'Stealth' to enter the dungeon, he didn't know where the Moon Piece was hidden. What would happen if his stealth turned off while he was in the dungeon?

'There is no way I can defeat the Bloody and Karakul all by myself. But.....'

"As you know, I need the Moon Piece. But it is impossible for me by myself. I need the help of the Wolrang who were the guardians of the Three Marvels."

"Of course we'd be interested in helping. It doesn't matter even if the entire clan is wiped out."

The elder then sighed and shook his head.

"But we have no power. We've lost our fangs and claws, and we also lost our courage."

"It will be different if you have the power of the moon. Radun!"

Ssak ssak ssak, ssak ssak ssak ssak!

Radun flicked his tongue and spat out a stone. It was a Moon rock he sneaked out of the dungeon!

The elder cried out with distress and grasped the Moon rock after he saw it.

"Hik, t-this is..... No way!"

Susususu.

Silvery fur started sprouting from the hand holding the Moon Rock. After that was the long nails and sharp fangs inside a snout. The elder growled in a pleased voice after transforming into a silver wolf.

"Ohhhhh, this power..... My combative spirit is burning in my heart..... This is it, the Wolrang family....."

"I have enough Moon rocks to distribute to all the villagers. Now, would you like to help me?"

"Of course. No, please let us help! Recovering the Moon Piece will allow us to repay the humiliation. In addition, you are the Truthseeker. You are the descendant of the great Hero Maban so we would like nothing more than to fight beside you. Please lead us against Karakul and the clan's traitor Albert."

At the same time, there were two dings and a quest window popped up.

Wolrang's Revenge

You have found the descendants of the Wolrang in the Dark Earth. However, the vampire Karakul has taken away their treasure and subjected the Wolrang to humiliation every day. Help the Wolrang family get revenge on Karakul and the clan's traitor Albert.

<Difficulty: B+>

"I understand. But I need time to prepare. Please wait 2~3 days. This can't be discovered by Karakul or Albert. So you'll have to secretly prepare the other villagers. Ah, and of course you shouldn't shapeshift."

The wolf instantly turned back into an old man after Ark took the Moon rock away. Then Dedric suddenly exclaimed.

"Wait, you're really thinking about fighting Karakul?"

"Haven't you been listening?"

"No, absolutely not! Master doesn't know how strong Karakul is. And even if Master manages to kill Karakul....."

"I already know that."

If he killed a vampire then he would incite the wrath of the strongest vampire. Ark and the Wolrang would all be wiped out in an instant. Even if he won the fight against Karakul, there was a 100% chance that he would die after the battle. However, Ark grabbed Dedric's shoulder firmly and grinned.

"There's no need to worry. The one who will defeat Karakul is you."

"Ah, it was like that. I also..... Eh? W-w-w-what?"

"Didn't you hear me? The Wolrang will make it possible for you to fight against Karakul. You will have the best role of defeating the leader. After all, it doesn't matter if vampires kill each other."

"Don't talk nonsense! There is no way I could win against Karakul!"

Dedric panicked and turned pale while shaking like crazy.

"Didn't you say you would willingly plunge into a dragon's mouth if I ordered you to?"

"B-but....."

"You are also a vampire. Don't you want to show something nice to your cousins?"

"But I won't be able to win!"

"Don't worry, I'll make sure that you win."

Ark replied with a wicked grin.

Act 9: Showdown, Vampire vs. Vampire?

"Are you ready?"

"Yes we are."

The elder of the Wolrang clan nodded at Ark's question. In the dark forest before Karakul's castle, 100 silver werewolves had gathered. They had necklaces with a Moon rock emitting a pale light around their neck which Ark had provided.

"The time limit in this area is 30 minutes."

"We know."

Although the Moon rock had the power to change them, the power of the Moon Piece was like a battery that was being drained by the Wolrang. Therefore there was a time limit on it. Ark had tested this before leaving. As a result, he determined that the Wolrang could only maintain their form for 30 minutes.

'30 minutes isn't that much time. But wiping out all the enemies isn't our purpose. I just need to reach Karakul within 30 minutes.'

"It won't be an easy battle."

"We've prepared ourselves. And we are ready to die. But....."

The elder wiped the snot flowing from his nose and quickly asked.

".....Is 'that' really going to work?"

"Yes, trust me."

Ark smiled and explained the plan.

"Apart from the elder and ten elite people selected, the remaining troops will disperse to important areas of the castle. However, you don't need to be too unreasonable. Like I told you, defeating all the enemies isn't our goal. If it seems dangerous then you can leave."

"But if the strategy fails then won't it be too dangerous for you will the escape route blocked?"

"I won't consider retreating even if the strategy fails."

"Yes, you really are a descendant of Hero Maban."

Fighting spirit was ignited in the eyes of the Wolrang after Ark's answer. If the Commander showed a resolution not to give up even in the face of death, naturally the morale of the soldiers would also increase.

"There's no time left so let's go."

"Understood. Wolrang warriors, prepare to enter the battlefield! Grind you fangs. Sharpen your claws!"

"Ohhhhhh!"

The Wolrang raised their voices in unison.

"Radun, let's go!"

Ssak ssak ssak! Pa pa pa pa!

Radun raised a cloud of dust as he ran towards the castle at Ark's command. The 100 Wolrang followed with their silver mane fluttering behind them. The guards cried out in confusion as the Wolrang approached up the steep slope.

"Huk, t-those guys are.....?"

"Are they the Bloody from another territory that is invading?"

"No, they are the Wolrang from the village near the coast. But shouldn't their abilities be sealed? How did they transform themselves?"

"Hurry up! Tell the Earl! Everybody else stop them!"

A guard cast off his human skin and changed into a Bloody before shouting orders.

“It’s too late, Dark Blade!”

Kwa kwa kwa kwang!

Radun accelerated forward and crashed into the Bloody. At the same time, Ark jumped over the Bloody into the castle grounds and turned around to use Dark Blade. In an attack of this scale, a slowed reaction from a surprise attack could make a difference. The backstab dealt tremendous damage and the Bloody fell down. Ark kicked the Bloody’s face as it tried to get up before using XX Interceptor. The Bloody shrieked and cowered from the pain that it was feeling for the first time.

“Ugh, h-he……!”

Kuaah, kuaaang!

A Bloody brandished a spear and ran up to Ark. But the Wolrang surged forward several metres and attacked the Bloody. The Meow’s style of attack was to avoid the enemy’s attack with their quick movements then counterattacking in a vital spot. However, the Wolrang’s style was much simpler. They pushed forward with their strength and strong bodies before biting off the Bloody’s flesh with their fangs. The Bloody tried to counterattack with spears but the steel was no match against the Wolrang’s defense. Their strength and health was also one of the best among their profession. The Bloody were torn like rags under the attack of the Wolrang family.

Awooooo!

A howl emerged from the mouths of the Wolrang. In the past, the Wolrang had defeated the Bloody and drove Karakul into a corner.

“There is no time for howling!”

Ark ignored the Wolrang family who were caught in the atmosphere and continued his plan.

“It’s an invasion!”

When they entered the castle, the guards and employees immediately transformed into Bloody. It was enough to cause fear but Ark just ignored the scene. He had to reach Karakul on the 10th floor before the time limit of 30 minutes was over. There was no time to look at unnecessary things.

“1st unit, take care of the 1st floor!”

Ten of the Wolrang family spread out at Ark's command. The Wolrang dashed over 10 metres and splattered flesh and blood everywhere. They've had their power and honour taken away for a long time so they attacked vengefully. But the advancing Ark and Wolrang family didn't even turn their heads.

"That's it, 2nd unit take care the 2nd floor!"

Once again, ten of the Wolrang split off and jumped around the area. Ark commanded 10 Wolrang to split off on each floor and just ran up the stairs without stopping. The number of Bloody doubled when he reached the 5th floor. It was to the extent that the unit made up of ten attackers couldn't keep up. Although they were steadily going up, they lost 10 Wolrang on each floor so the Wolrang's power gradually weakened. While going up the stairs and breaking through the Bloody, the Wolrang at the rear became a burden. Those who separated from their unit were torn to pieces. But there no time to worry about them. If they stopped for just a moment then they would be surrounded by Bloody.

Kuaaaang!

Nevertheless, weren't they still the Wolrang family? Even when surrounded by the enemy, there was no Wolrang who asked for help. Instead they persisted in attacked the Bloody even with their dying breaths. Thanks to that, Ark managed to penetrate the steadily increasing Bloody and reached the 10th floor. But after passing the 9th floor, there was only 10 Wolrang left. On the other hand, close to 50 Bloody swarmed in the hallway.

"Those guys, they've reached here!"

"Block them! Make sure they don't enter Earl Karakul's room!"

"Ya, you beep-beep bastards!"

Ark used his advanced Intimidation skill. The gathered Bloody winced and stiffened.

"The goal is right before our eyes. Everyone have courage!"

He also used advanced Nursing to restore the energy of the tired Wolrang.

"Ohhhh, now's the time! Show them the latent power of the Wolrang family!"

"Don't fear death and just break through the enemy!"

"If we can't move then just die with the Bloody! That is an honourable death!"

Ark and the Wolrang swung their swords and penetrated the Bloody. Blades came flying from everywhere! The Wolrang leading the charge became bloody in an instant. Then the Wolrang spread his arms and grabbed four or five Bloody before jumping through a window.

"We aren't the vampire's food! For the Wolrangggggg!"

"Truthseeker watch carefully, this is the Wolrang ahhhhhhhh!"

The situation became messy as other Wolrang followed suit to jump out the window. It was really a scene that couldn't be seen without tears. Thanks to the suicide bombing of the Wolrang, the number of Bloody had instantly been reduced in half.

"Riposte!"

Meanwhile Ark took out the surrounding Bloody. He then just Sprint and dived like an arrow through the door. Ark rolled his body before standing up and looking around the room.

Palapalapala.

In a dark room lit by several candles, Karakul was just playing a pipe organ without any concern. Thanks to Ark and the Wolrang opening the door, even the Bloody looked at the scene with bemusement.

'He truly is a vampire.....'

A curse naturally emerged.

"Karakul!"

Karakul stopped playing after Ark shouted angrily. He slowly got up and turned around before laughing while showing his fangs.

"Huhuhu, the guy making all the commotion is the food who escaped a while ago. Why have you returned without any fear? Aren't these the dogs I trapped? Bah, and these pitiful creatures dare to show themselves after I spared their lives? As expected for wild dogs. If it wasn't for Albert then I would've killed you all....."

Karakul looked around with relaxed eyes and walked forward.

"Do you think you will be able to kill me?"

"Let's see? I won't know until I try."

"How impertinent, kill them all."

As if it was too troublesome for Karakul, he refused and turned around. The Bloody who had been startled for a while once again raised their weapons.

"Karakul, are you running away?"

"What?"

Karakul frowned and turned around.

"Summon Demon, Dedric!"

"Ohh, Dark Dash!"

Dedric closed his eyes tightly and rushed towards Karakul. There was a sound like firewood cracking as Karakul stepped backwards.

"Ugh, what, what the, this guy?"

"E-E-Earl Karakul. A-according to the laws of the vampires, I challenge you to a duel!"

"What? Who are you?"

"I'm the one who inherited from Dunphil, Dedric!"

Dedric cried out. The die was cast.

"Stop!"

Karakul's voice rang through the room. All the Bloody that were attacking the Wolrang in the castle stopped moving. Karakul lowered his hand and stared at Dedric. Anger turned his eyes a deep red.

"Dunphil..... The one who was scared of me and ran away..... His descendant would only be a low level vampire at most..... You dare..... Challenge me to a duel?"

"Ah, no. That....."

Dedric trembled as he closed his eyes before shouting.

"Y-y-yes!"

“Do you know what it means? The consciousness of the Lord supervises all vampire duels in Dark Earth. Even if you are recalled when defeated, you will still die afterwards. It means eternal annihilation.”

“I know, dammit! I know that!”

“Hahaha! You know? Yet you still dared challenge me?” Karakul suddenly shouted.

“So you think you can win against me!”

At the same time, all the windows in the room shook and broke. A large storm rolled around the room as Karakul approached Dedric.

“Okay, I have no interest in your small land but I’ll kill you.”

It was at that time. A bloody red circle around 10 metres in diameter was abruptly drawn around Karakul and Dedric. At the same time, an information window appeared in front of Ark.

-A vampire duel had begun.

The magic of the Vampire Lord who rules that Dark Earth has activated. When the vampire duel has begun, no battles are permitted within 100 metres.

In addition, no other vampires are allowed to enter. All physical and magic attacks from outside will be blocked by the magic circle. When the duel ends, all of the loser’s possessions are automatically given to the winner. When defeated, your territory and castle will be taken away and your soul destroyed.

‘That’s it, my plan has succeeded!’

Ark clenched his fist as he read the information window. If Dedric who had a territory challenged Karakul then he couldn’t refuse. That was why Ark broke through enemy lines to reach here. When receiving a duel application in Dark Earth, a vampire couldn’t refuse. And once the duel started, none of the vampire’s subordinates could fight. Although Ark and the Wolrang were slightly different, they could still be considered as Dedric’s subordinates. So there was no reason to fight a pointless battle.

“Summoning your pet to challenge me. You might use cheap tricks but I’ll make you regret it. I’ll kill him and then make you suffer.”

“We’ll see. Will it really be as easy as you expect?”

Ark picked his nose and murmured.

"You can only say that now."

Karakul muttered in a low voice. He instantaneously disappeared and showed up behind Dedric.

"Hik, what, what the?"

Dedric freaked out and flew into the sky. But Karakul changed his arms into wings, caught up and kicked Dedric. Dedric quickly lost 30% of his health.

"Kukukuku, I thought there was something when you applied for a duel..... This is indeed a joke. Somebody with these capabilities has become an aristocrat. Human, you believed this guy could attack me?"

Dedric wasn't even visible in Karakul's eyes as he spoke to Ark. It was natural since Dedric wasn't a match for Karakul. Currently Dedric's capabilities was around level 220~230. After Ark had frantically fed him dishes for two days to prepare for the duel, his level only rose to this degree. However, Karakul was level 500. It was more than two times the difference. But the difference was even wider than that. The Dark Earth was a place created for vampires. Of course, the added bonuses for vampires were terrific. Ark hadn't fully realized that part when making his plan. Compared to Karakul, Dedric wasn't a pureblood vampire. Although he had evolved from a bat into a vampire, his quality was still weak so the stat bonus received was low. Therefore 30% of his health disappeared at once. Three or four shots will destroy him. With other monsters, Dedric could evade the attacks by flying but that was difficult with vampires. If he fought directly than Dedric would be smashed in 1 minute.

'It is embarrassing to call Dedric a vampire. But he isn't subjected to the same weaknesses as his vampire opponent. It is his strength!'

"Dedric, use your escaping skills and hold on!"

"Wahhhhh, save me!"

Even without Ark's words, Dedric was already running away. Dedric who had gone through Ark's hellish training was an expert at evasion. Thanks to that, Karakul was unable to catch him.

"Kukukuku! This is your strategy? Running away? But this is a duel. It's not possible to run away after the duel begins."

"It is also impossible for you to run away."

"What the? Run away? Me?"

Karakul asked with an astounded expression.

"Now's the time. Wolrang, get ready to support my preparations! Take out the support tools!"

While the duel was ongoing, the Wolrang surrounded the duel circle and simultaneously took something out. Karakul who had been watching suddenly shrieked and cowered.

"Heok, what, what the, that? This creepy feeling is.....!"

"Heh, you were born in Dark Earth so you wouldn't know what this is. But your vampire instincts will still remember the shape. It is a cross."

"C-cross?"

Karakul muttered in a confused voice. Yes, this was one of the support tools Ark had gathered by riding the dolphin back to Haman Fortress. Tazza used his 'Cloning' skill while Lariette had blessed it! Karakul was born in Dark Earth so he had never seen a cross, but he instinctively feared it and kept a wary eye on the Wolrang.

"Eh? What's with that guy? What is he acting like this?"

Dedric tilted his head to one side after seeing Karakul tremble and retreat. Since he had evolved from a bat, Dedric's vampire alignment was still low so he wasn't affected by the crosses. However, Karakul had fallen into a state of panic and closed his eyes tightly.

"Ugh, you cowardly brat, this is a vampire's sacred duel....."

"Cowardly? What? Aren't we just supporting?"

Ark shook the cross and laughed.

"Now, shall we start cheering actively? Play, play, Dedric!"

"Play, play, Dedric! Win, win, Dedric!"

Ark and the Wolrang opened their mouths and cheered. Then the room began to fill with a strange odour. The smell finally reached Karakul's nose making him shriek.

“Eeeeeek, w-what the? What is this awful smell? My nose..... No, even my brain is paralyzed.....!”

This was the second support tool used by Ark! He attacked using garlic. Garlic was like rat poison to vampires. Therefore Ark had selected an elite group of Wolrang and fed them garlic soup. That’s the reason why the elder had a runny nose before leaving. Of course there was a terrible garlic smell every time they talked so it was like a bio-chemical weapon. It was a double attack of crosses and garlic smell! Every time they cheered, Karakul received mental damage and staggered. He wasn’t even paying attention to the duel anymore as he closed his eyes and blocked his nose while rolling on the floor screaming.

“Hehehe, I don’t know what’s happening but this is a chance!”

A strong person is weak while a weak person is strong..... Dedric truly acted like a human! Dedric rushed towards Karakul.

“Huk, s-stop!”

“What..... Ack!”

When Dedric ran up, Karakul immediately lifted his head and swung his nails. Although his five senses were paralyzed by the cross and garlic attack, it still wasn’t difficult for Karakul to counter attack against Dedric. Dedric received a critical hit and 50% of his health disappeared. His remaining life instantly went down to 20%. Dedric flapped his wings like a hummingbird and escaped in a hurry.

“You idiot! I told you that you won’t win if you go near him!”

“B-but how will I win if I don’t attack?”

Dedric shouted angrily.

“Didn’t I tell you? All you have to do is run away. Let’s prepare for the 3rd stage!”

“Ohhhhhh!”

The Wolrang heard Ark’s order and took out mirrors.

“Radun, [Vision] scroll!”

Ssak ssak, ssak ssak ssak ssak!

Ark tore the scroll that Radun spat out and shouted.

“Activate scroll, Saint’s Brilliance!”

It was at that time. An intense flash of light emerged from the scroll. It was Lariette’s skill Saint’s Brilliance. Another name was ‘Light Emission.’ Although Saint’s Brilliance had no effect on normal monsters, it did lethal damage to the undead or those with dark attributes. It was even more effective against the vampires where sunlight was like rat poison to them. It would be best if Lariette performed the magic directly. However, the place was Dark Earth. Thanks to Dark Blood, all skills of a ‘light’ nature were blocked and the user would continuously receive damage. So Ark decided to use the [Vision] scroll that the Eastern Nation sold. Over the last two days, Ark bought many [Vision] scrolls and had Lariette fill it with her magic. But there was one problem. The vampire duel blocked all physical and magical interference. Saint’s Brilliance was regarded as a magical attack so of course it would be blocked by the wards. However, Ark was a genius at using cheap and unexpected tricks.

“3rd stage illumination support!”

Glitter, glitter, glitter, glitter-!

He reflected Saint’s Brilliance off the mirrors that the Wolrang were holding and concentrated it on Karakul. Yes, he couldn’t use magic attacks but it was just reflected light once it bounced off the mirrors. Therefore the circle wouldn’t see it as magic and block it. In addition, ‘Holy Light’ was sufficient against vampires without anything else added to it.

“Aaaaack, h-hot! It is hot! Hot!”

The rays of light spun like a spider web inside the duelling circle. When Karakul was hit by the light, black smoke emerged from his body.

“What! What is this? It burns when it hits my flesh!”

Karakul couldn’t open his eyes so he didn’t know why his body was burning.

“Huhuhu, what is it? This is called the Holy Light.”

“W-what? Holy light? H-how..... Kuaaaak!”

Karakul changed into a bat and wildly flew around the duel circle. However, the Wolrang changed the angle of the mirror and pursued him. Thanks to the duel circle, Karakul couldn’t avoid it no matter how great his evasive skills. It was like Karakul was trapped in a 10 metre cylinder of light and his health quickly decreased. Karakul tried to turn into the size of a mouse but the Wolrang just aimed the mirror at the ground.

“Hahahah! Isn’t this exciting?”

Dedric, do you understand? You just have to run away no matter what. Never get close to him!”

Ark shouted as he continued to activate the scrolls.

“U-understood!”

“This cowardly bastard”

“Cowardly? What? What did I do? Did I shoot an arrow or use magic?”

Ark smirked and retorted impudently.

“Ugh, this is a sacred duel..... Kuak, hot..... Using a trick like this.....! B-Bloody, kill those bastards!”

Karakul stomped his feet and frantically shouted. However, all battles were banned in this area until the duel was over. All the Bloody could do was stop the light with their bodies. However, the Wolrang just used their extraordinary jumping power and continued to reflect the light.

“Uhh! But this light..... Your summon will also be hit by the reflected light..... He will never avoid all of it..... His health is also low..... Even just a small graze.....”

Karakul moved closer to Dedric while he was talking and the light hit him. Dedric cowered and screamed.

“Aaaack, this.....! This light is.... This light is..... Ayu, sparkly. Aye Master, it is too dazzling.”

“W-what? How did this guy?”

Karakul flinched and Ark replied with a smirk.

“Huhuhu, I’m sorry but Dedric is a fake vampire.”

“Huk, a fake? D-don’t tell me.....?”

“I’m not joking. You still don’t understand? You misunderstood and Dedric isn’t actually Dunphil’s descendant. He was originally a bat.”

Of course Dedric weakened when hit by the light. But all it did was make him feel slightly ill and decreased his stats by 20%. It wasn’t the type of damage that Karakul

received as a pureblood vampire. When Karakul was hit by the light, his stats were reduced by 50% and he received 30 damage every second. Thanks to Karakul being burned by the light, his health had lost 80% of his health.

“Ugh! At this rate..... I can’t lose to a bat..... Vampire Tempest!”

Like the majority of high level monsters, Karakul was hiding a trump card. Karakul spun his body like a spin top and a violent storm appeared inside the circle. His cloak also split into many blades and approached one by one.

“Oh, t-that guy..... Concentrate the light!”

Ark cried in a desperate voice as the Wolrang obeyed. However, the Bloody desperately blocked half the attack. If Dedric was hit by the storm of blades then their chance of defeating Karakul would disappear. Dedric’s current health was 20% after his rash actions. Karakul’s special move would kill him instantly.

“M-Master, please help!”

Dedric pressed against the boundary of the wards and looked at Ark with worry. Then Ark’s thoughts started to turn over in his head.

“Line up all the crosses in front of the mirror. It is a plan of desperation. Saint’s Brilliance!”

Ark tore open five [Vision] scrolls at once and shouted. At that moment, a brilliant light flooded the room. The only place the light didn’t strike was the circle boundary. However, the light that reflected off the mirrors penetrated the duel circle. No, it wasn’t just light. The light was shaped like a huge cross!

Kwa kwa kwa kwang!

A huge explosion occurred in Karakul’s body. At the same time, Karakul’s Vampire Tempest skill was released. A clear cross pattern was burnt on the body with black smoke emerging from it. Was that all? Karakul received continuous damage from the light and rolled around on the ground.

“Now Dedric! Use your vampire skill Hammering!”

“Oh, take this!”

Dedric crashed into Karakul’s head like a big hammer. It was the trump card skill that too him 10 tries to suck from Bul-kkun, Hammering! It was a skill that took too much time in an actual battle but it dealt 400% damage. When hit by Hammering,

there was a strange sound. The remaining 3% of his health disappeared and Karakul collapsed.

“U-unbelievable..... I was killed by a bat.....”

-Your level has risen.

-Your level has risen.

-Your level has risen.....

When Karakul collapsed, message windows continuously appeared in front of Ark. He had gained 7 levels! Since his summon had killed the enemy, he still received the experience. So the amount of experience Dedric gained was also applied to Ark.

“Wahhhhhh! Karakul is defeated!”

The Wolrang cheered when Karakul died. The level 220~230 Dedric had defeated a level 500 vampire. Well, all Dedric did was deal the final blow..... But wasn't the results important?

“Eh..... R-really..... I really won?”

Dedric made a perplexed expression before gripping his fist and shouting.

“Did you see? I really won? M-Master, I am the champion!”

Wasn't this like a parody?

‘Well, it doesn't really matter. Soon I can find the last Three Marvels and change to my second profession!’

How long had he waited for this moment? While the enchantment in the centre of the room slowly faded, an intense blast of wind entered through the window. Ark reflexively closed his eyes to stop the dust from entering.

“Huk, what, what the? What on earth.....?”

A strange existence floated in the space where the duel circle was. He wore a robe with complicated designs on it with the hood covering its face.....a dark aura appeared around the cloak while the huge black wings fluttered. The blood vanished from the Wolrang's face when he appeared.

“T-the vampire referee.....”

“Vampire referee?”

“He is under the direct control of the Lord and supervises all the duels between vampires.”

As expected from a high ranking vampire aristocrat, the referee exuded a tremendous aura. He was level 900! However Ark had heard that they weren't involved in anything outside the castle. Except when a vampire was killed by other species.....

‘Don't tell me he thinks the duel wasn't fair?’

Ark looked at the referee with a tense expression. However, the referee wasn't interested in Ark and spoke to Dedric.

“Dedric.....”

“Huh? Yes!”

The normally mannerless Dedric had prostrated himself on the ground.

“You have defeated the vampire Karakul through a vampire duel.”

The referee looked at Ark and the Wolrang and a small smile appeared on his face.

“You seemed to have used a shortcut..... I judge that there were no actions which violated the Lord's rules. According to the Great Vampire Lord's laws, all of Earl Karakul's assets will henceforth be yours. Dedric, I bestow the glory of victory on you in the name of the Lord.”

When the referee raised his hand, blue flames engulfed Karakul and something black appeared. The black heart flew towards Dedric who absorbed it.

At the same time, an information window appeared in front of Ark.

-Your summon Dedric has defeated the higher ranking vampire Karakul.

Thanks to the absorption of Karakul's heart and blood, Dedric can now evolve. Please choose one familiar to be the main. The Familiar created by the fusion evolution will have the main Familiar's stats with the auxiliary Familiar's stats after consideration.

‘Evolution? Ohhh, what kind of luck is this?’

Ark's mouth dropped absent-mindedly as he stared at the information window. Of course, he knew that Dedric would inherit all of Karakul's possessions if he defeated him. However, Ark never imagined that it would make him evolve.

"Huh?"

Then the referee shook his head and looked at Ark.

"You..... Are the Master who summons Dedric?"

"Yes, that's right."

Was there a problem? Ark quickly closed his mouth and answered. The referee murmured like he was thinking out loud.

"Until now there had been only one person who made a vampire his summon, Hero Maban..... Oh, is it like that? His descendant has appeared?"

It wasn't a voice filled with hostility. No, somehow it was filled with longing.....

"You know Hero Maban?"

Ark asked but the referee did not answer. He just started outside with vague eyes before suddenly asking a question.

"As the descendant of Hero Maban, you can choose the evolution. You already know this but even among the vampire clan, Karakul was someone born with rare power and talent. He is already dead but if you choose him during evolution then you'll receive a powerful summon that Dedric can't even be compared to. What personality will you choose to evolve?"

Dedric looked at Ark with a slightly worried expression. Thanks to his previous behaviour, Dedric was worried about the evolution. But Ark wasn't worried.

Stats? Future skills? Of course it was important.

However, Ark's thoughts about his summons weren't as simple as that. He was even more certain after spending several days without his summons. If Dedric's personality disappeared then it would be better not to evolve him.

"Dedric."

Ark answered without any hesitation and the corner of the referee's lips turned up. It was an expression where he was unsure if the referee was smiling or frowning. When there was silence for a while, Ark once again opened his mouth.

Then abruptly the body of the referee turned into hundreds of bats and flew out the window.

“My duty here is over. Choose as you will!”

Ark sighed and relaxed. It was fortunate that the referee hadn't seen any problems with the duel. Then he proceeded with the evolution and Dedric was wrapped in a red light. Just like when he turned from a bat into a vampire, the dark energy was the only visible change.

-The evolution has been successfully carried out.

Dedric has been promoted after absorbing Karakul's strength. The great Lord who rules the vampire clan has given him the name 'Racard.' Racard has acquired the necessary knowledge to become a higher ranking vampire. In addition, he had gained the rights to all assets and territory left by Karakul.

-Racard

A vampire who has defeated the vampire Karakul through a duel and gained the title of Earl.

His magic has become more powerful after absorbing Karakul's blood. In addition, the fragments of Karakul's knowledge will manifest his vampire powers quicker. However, the blood of a vampire has increased his weakness to light.

While in the sunlight, he will be unable to change into a vampire during the daytime and have all stats reduced by 50%. In addition, his resistance to the dark has increased by 50% while his resistance to the light decreases by 50%.

Race: Demonic

Alignment: Dark

Ranking: Middle class

Health: 1,520 (+150)

Loyalty: 78 (+20)

Strength 113 (+20)

Agility 95 (+20)

Stamina 279 (+20)

Wisdom 58 (+50),

Intelligence 166 (+50)

Luck 36 (+10)

* Attack power of Lancel's sword has increased by 9, durability increased by 80.

* The skill slots of Blood-sucking has increased to 2.

* The effect of 'Skill Block' has been added to Blood-sucking.

-You have learnt the 'Blood Lane' skill.

-Skill block <Blood-sucking secondary effect> (Beginner, Racial special skill):
Karakul's special skill.

When using the Blood-sucking skill, there is a 10% chance to block one of the enemy's skills. However, the blocked skill is randomly decided. An increase in skill proficiency will increase the probability and duration of the blocked skill.

-Blood Lane (Beginner, Species characteristics): The blood of a vampire is a dark existence with a strong curse embedded in it.

Blood Lane is a technique which scatters the vampire's blood and applies a curse to a fixed area. When affected by the blood, there is a 50% chance of delusions, confusion, frenzy and despair which decreases the combat power. However, the vampire will also have its abilities reduced by 50% until he recovers the blood lost. Blood Lane can only be used in the evening.

<There is a 50% probability that all enemies within 10 metres will be affected by the various situations mentioned for 10 minutes>

Kwa kwa kwa kwang!

The place where there was a huge magic circle shook with a roaring sound. At the same time, half of the demons within collapsed. A knight wearing black armour and holding a blood stained bayonet raised his head. Then he pulled out a jewel the size of a fist from his bag. A sinister aura that was difficult to describe surrounded it. The knight looked around and soaked the jewel in a pool of blood. Then a black message window appeared.

-You have succeeded in absorbing the essence of 666 lesser demons in the 'Devil's

Jewel.

‘The Devil’s Jewel has also absorbed the special abilities of the demons.

“It’s over.”

The knight murmured quietly. It was at that time. Suddenly the space behind him distorted and an old man appeared.

“Congratulations, you’ve finally become strong enough to completely conquer the lesser demons.”

“It took a lot more time than I thought.”

“Of course. The lesser demon is a much stronger opponent than the demons you’ve fought so far. Naturally it would be difficult to defeat them the first few times. But now you’ve acquired the abilities of the lesser demons so you are finally a proper Ruin Knight.”

Ruin Knight! That’s right. The knight in the black armour was Alan. Alan had obtained the ‘Hatred’ stat after being defeated by Ark and changed professions to a Ruin Knight. Afterwards, Maseutyu had brought him to high level hunting grounds to learn the Ruin Knight related skills. A Ruin Knight had to collect the essences of demons! One of the abilities of a Ruin Knight was to absorb the ability of the corresponding monster using the Devil’s Jewel. So far, Alan had absorbed 20 different skills. All the high levelled demons he absorbed from had unique and powerful skills.

‘A Ruin Knight is a stronger profession than I thought. According to the skills absorbed and my level, my damage completely exceeds that of a Holy Knight.’

Of course, raising a Ruin Knight wasn’t as easy as it sounded. He had spent the last few months just hunting monsters that had passed through the wards.

“How long am I going to be doing this?”

“You don’t want to become strong?”

“I do but.....”

“Huhuhu, don’t worry. The training is over.”

Maseutyu laughed. Then the space warped again and someone entered the wards. Surprisingly, the person who appeared was a user with red hair wearing a white mask. Maseutyu instantly spoke in an enthusiastic voice when the person appeared.

“This person is the implementer of the true history, the master of true darkness.”

“You are the Ruin Knight?”

“Who are you?”

“Like you heard, I am the one implementing the true history. My task is to rectify the wrong history. Your strength will support me. It is possible right now. Once I tell you about something interesting then you’ll be more involved. No, there is no doubt about it.”

‘Something I’ll be interested in? Is he talking about the company’s entrance examination?’

Of course, the reason Alan started the game was to join Global Exos. However that was a few months ago. Now his only purpose in playing the game was to get vengeance on Ark. He wouldn’t have endured the last few months if it wasn’t for the thoughts of vengeance.

“But I....”

“Your first task involves Seutandal which has re-joined middle earth. Almost all the preparations are finished. How about it? Will the Ruin Knight appear in that world?”

Alan flinched and looked at the Red Man. Alan had also seen the video of Ark posted on the official site.

‘If Ark can I do then I can as well. Although I would like to find Ark straight away, that would be too boring. Okay, let’s challenge Ark. I’ll use the system to send him an official challenge. Just wait Ark!’

“Good, then follow me.”

An eerie grey light crept into his helmet.

TO BE CONTINUED

[End of Book 13]